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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

BÉATRIX

.



Abel Louie
New York

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THE WORKS
OF
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOLUME II

BÉATRIX
FAME AND SORROW. COLONEL CHABERT
THE ATHEIST'S MASS
THE PURSE. LA GRENADIÈRE

Illustrated

BY ALBERT FOURDÉ AND LAURENT-DESROUSSEAUX

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
BOSTON

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University Press :

JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S. A.

NOTE.

IT is somewhat remarkable that Balzac, dealing as he did with traits of character and the minute and daily circumstances of life, has never been accused of representing actual persons in the two or three thousand portraits which he painted of human nature.

In "The Great Man of the Provinces in Paris" some likenesses were imagined: Jules Janin in Étienne Lousteau, Armand Carrel in Michel Chrétien, and, possibly, Berryer in Daniel d'Arthèz. But in the present volume, "Béatrix," he used the characteristics of certain persons, which were recognized and admitted at the time of publication. Mademoiselle

(Giselle Moinon) is George Sand in character, though applied by some to her, is easily recognized from her, and Claude Vignon are Liszt, and the well-known

one, representing the manners of the day, a social state existing no longer, the transition period of the customs and ideas of the present, remarkable and most famous in our Life."

K. P. W.

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GIFT OF

CAIUS M. HOFFMAN '32

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The opening scene of this volume, representing the manners and customs of the old Breton family, a social state existing no longer except in history, and the transition period of the *vieille roche* as it passed into the customs and ideas of the present century, is one of Balzac's remarkable and most famous pictures in the "Comedy of Human Life."

K. P. W.

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B É A T R I X.



I.

A BRETON TOWN AND MANSION.

FRANCE, especially in Brittany, still possesses certain towns completely outside of the movement which gives to the nineteenth century its peculiar characteristics. For lack of quick and regular communication with Paris, scarcely connected by wretched roads with the sub-prefecture, or the chief city of their own province, these towns regard the new civilization as a spectacle to be gazed at; it amazes them, but they never applaud it; and, whether they fear it or scoff at it, they continue faithful to the old manners and customs which have come down to them. Whoso would travel as a moral archæologist, observing men instead of stones, would find images of the time of Louis XV. in many a village of Provence, of the time of Louis XIV. in the depths of Poitou, and of still more ancient times in the towns of Brittany. Most of these towns have fallen from states of splendor never mentioned by historians, who are always more concerned with facts and dates than with the truer history of manners and customs. The tradition of this splendor still lives in the memory of

the people, — as in Brittany, where the native character allows no forgetfulness of things which concern its own land. Many of these towns were once the capitals of a little feudal State, — a county or duchy conquered by the crown or divided among many heirs, if the male line failed. Disinherited from active life, these heads became arms; and arms deprived of nourishment, wither and barely vegetate.

For the last thirty years, however, these pictures of ancient times are beginning to fade and disappear. Modern industry, working for the masses, goes on destroying the creations of ancient art, the works of which were once as personal to the consumer as to the artisan. Nowadays we have *products*, we no longer have *works*. Public buildings, monuments of the past, count for much in the phenomena of retrospection; but the monuments of modern industry are freestone quarries, saltpetre mines, cotton factories. A few more years and even these old cities will be transformed and seen no more except in the pages of this iconography.

One of the towns in which may be found the most correct likeness of the feudal ages is Guérande. The name alone awakens a thousand memories in the minds of painters, artists, thinkers who have visited the slopes on which this splendid jewel of feudality lies proudly posed to command the flux and reflux of the tides and the dunes, — the summit, as it were, of a triangle, at the corners of which are two other jewels not less curious: Croisic, and the village of Batz. There are no towns after Guérande except Vitré in the centre of Brittany, and Avignon in the south of France, which

preserve so intact, to the very middle of our epoch, the type and form of the middle ages.

Guérande is still encircled with its doughty walls; its moats are full of water, its battlements entire, its loopholes unincumbered with vegetation; even ivy has never cast its mantle over the towers, square or round. The town has three gates, where may be seen the rings of the portcullises; it is entered by a drawbridge of iron-clamped wood, no longer raised but which could be raised at will. The mayoralty was blamed for having, in 1820, planted poplars along the banks of the moat to shade the promenade. It excused itself on the ground that the long and beautiful esplanade of the fortifications facing the dunes had been converted one hundred years earlier into a mall where the inhabitants took their pleasure beneath the elms.

The houses of the old town have suffered no change; and they have neither increased nor diminished. None have suffered upon their frontage from the hammer of the architect, the brush of the plasterer, nor have they staggered under the weight of added stories. All retain their primitive characteristics. Some rest on wooden columns which form arcades under which foot-passengers circulate, the floor planks bending beneath them, but never breaking. The houses of the merchants are small and low; their fronts are veneered with slate. Wood, now decaying, counts for much in the carved material of the window-casings and the pillars, above which grotesque faces look down, while shapes of fantastic beasts climb up the angles, animated by that great thought of Art, which in those old days gave life to inanimate nature. These relics, resisting

change, present to the eye of painters those dusky tones and half-blurred features in which the artistic brush delights.

The streets are what they were four hundred years ago, — with one exception: population no longer swarms there; the social movement is now so dead that a traveller wishing to examine the town (as beautiful as a suit of antique armor) may walk alone, not without sadness, through a deserted street, where the mullioned windows are plastered up to avoid the window-tax. This street ends at a postern, flanked with a wall of masonry, beyond which rises a bouquet of trees planted by the hands of Breton nature, one of the most luxuriant and fertile vegetations in France. A painter, a poet would sit there silently, to taste the quietude which reigns beneath the well-preserved arch of the postern, where no voice comes from the life of the peaceful city, and where the landscape is seen in its rich magnificence through the loop holes of the casemates once occupied by halberdiers and archers, which are not unlike the sashes of some belvedere arranged for a point of view.

It is impossible to walk about the place without thinking at every step of the habits and usages of long-past times; the very stones tell of them; the ideas of the middle ages are still there with all their ancient superstitions. If, by chance, a gendarme passes you, with his silver-laced hat, his presence is an anachronism against which your sense of fitness protests; but nothing is so rare as to meet a being or an object of the present time. There is even very little of the clothing of the day; and that little the inhabi-

tants adapt in a way to their immutable customs, their unchangeable physiognomies. The public square is filled with Breton costumes, which artists flock to draw; these stand out in wonderful relief upon the scene around them. The whiteness of the linen worn by the *paludiers* (the name given to men who gather salt in the salt-marshes) contrasts vigorously with the blues and browns of the peasantry and the original and sacredly preserved jewelry of the women. These two classes, and that of the sailors in their jerkins and varnished leather caps are as distinct from one another as the castes of India, and still recognize the distance that parts them from the bourgeoisie, the nobility, and the clergy. All lines are clearly marked; there the revolutionary level found the masses too rugged and too hard to plane; its instrument would have been notched, if not broken. The character of immutability which science gives to zoölogical species is found in Breton human nature. Even now, after the Revolution of 1830, Guérande is still a town apart, essentially Breton, fervently Catholic, silent, self-contained, — a place where modern ideas have little access.

Its geographical position explains this phenomenon. The pretty town overlooks a salt-marsh, the product of which is called throughout Brittany the Guérande salt, to which many Bretons attribute the excellence of their butter and their sardines. It is connected with the rest of France by two roads only: that coming from Savenay, the arrondissement to which it belongs, which stops at Saint-Nazaire; and a second road, leading from Vannes, which connects it with the Morbihan. The arrondissement road establishes communi-

cation by land, and from Saint-Nazaire by water, with Nantes. The land road is used only by government; the more rapid and more frequented way being by water from Saint-Nazaire. Now, between this village and Guérande is a distance of eighteen miles, which the mail-coach does not serve, and for good reason; not three coach passengers a year would pass over it.

These, and other obstacles, little fitted to encourage travellers, still exist. In the first place, government is slow in its proceedings; and next, the inhabitants of the region put up readily enough with difficulties which separate them from the rest of France. Guérande, therefore, being at the extreme end of the continent, leads nowhere, and no one comes there. Glad to be ignored, she thinks and cares about herself only. The immense product of her salt-marshes, which pays a tax of not less than a million to the Treasury, is chiefly managed at Croisic, a peninsular village which communicates with Guérande over quicksands which efface during the night the tracks made by day, and also by boats which cross the arm of the sea that makes the port of Croisic.

This fascinating little town is therefore the Herculeum of feudality, less its winding sheet of lava. It is afoot, but not living; it has no other ground of existence except that it has not been demolished. If you reach Guérande from Croisic, after crossing a dreary landscape of salt-marshes, you will experience a strong sensation at sight of that vast fortification, which is still as good as ever. If you come to it by Saint-Nazaire, the picturesqueness of its position and the naïve grace of its environs will please you no less.

The country immediately surrounding it is ravishing; the hedges are full of flowers, honeysuckles, roses, box, and many enchanting plants. It is like an English garden, designed by some great architect. This rich, coy nature, so untrodden, with all the grace of a bunch of violets or a lily of the valley in the glade of a forest, is framed by an African desert banked by the ocean, — a desert without a tree, an herb, a bird; where, on sunny days, the laboring *paludiers*, clothed in white and scattered among those melancholy swamps where the salt is made, remind us of Arabs in their burrows.

Thus Guérande bears no resemblance to any other place in France. The town produces somewhat the same effect upon the mind as a sleeping-draught upon the body. It is silent as Venice. There is no other public conveyance than the springless wagon of a carrier who carries travellers, merchandise, and occasionally letters from Saint-Nazaire to Guérande and *vice versa*. Bernus, the carrier, was, in 1829, the factotum of this large community. He went and came when he pleased; all the country knew him; and he did the errands of all. The arrival of a carriage in Guérande, that of a lady or some invalid going to Croisie for sea-bathing (thought to have greater virtue among those rocks than at Boulogne or Dieppe) is still an immense event. The peasants come in on horseback, most of them with commodities for barter in sacks. They are induced to do so (and so are the *paludiers*) by the necessity of purchasing the jewels distinctive of their caste which are given to all Breton brides, and the white lincn, or cloth for their clothing.

For a circuit ten miles round, Guérande is always GUÉRANDE, — the illustrious town where the famous treaty was signed in 1365, the key of the coast, which may boast, not less than the village of Batz, of a splendor now lost in the night of time. The jewels, linen, cloth, ribbon, and hats are made elsewhere, but to those who buy them they are from Guérande and nowhere else. All artists, and even certain bourgeois, who come to Guérande feel, as they do at Venice, a desire (soon forgotten) to end their days amid its peace and silence, walking in fine weather along the beautiful mall which surrounds the town from gate to gate on the side toward the sea. Sometimes the image of this town arises in the temple of memory; she enters, crowned with her towers, clasped with her girdle; her flower-strewn robe floats onward, the golden mantle of her dunes enfolds her, the fragrant breath of her briony paths, filled with the flowers of each passing season, exhales at every step; she fills your mind, she calls to you like some enchanting woman whom you have met in other climes and whose presence still lingers in a fold of your heart.

Near the church of Guérande stands a mansion which is to the town what the town is to the region, an exact image of the past, the symbol of a grand thing destroyed, — a poem, in short. This mansion belongs to the noblest family of the province; to the du Guaisnics, who, in the times of the du Guesclins, were as superior to the latter in antiquity and fortune as the Trojans were to the Romans. The Guaisqlains (the name is also spelled in the olden time du Glaiquin), from which comes du Guesclin, issued from the Guaisnics.

Old as the granite of Brittany, the Guaisnics are neither Frenchmen nor Gauls, — they are Bretons ; or, to be more exact, they are Celts. Formerly, they must have been Druids, gathering mistletoe in the sacred forests and sacrificing men upon their dolmens. Useless to say what they were ! To-day this race, equal to the Rohans without having deigned to make themselves princes, a race which was powerful before the ancestors of Hugues Capet were ever heard of, this family, pure of all alloy, possesses two thousand francs a year, its mansion in Guérande, and the little castle of Guaisnic. All the lands belonging to the barony of Guaisnic, the first in Brittany, are pledged to farmers, and bring in sixty thousand francs a year, in spite of ignorant culture. The du Guaisnics remain the owners of these lands although they receive none of the revenues, for the reason that for the last two hundred years they have been unable to pay off the money advanced upon them. They are in the position of the crown of France towards its *engagistes* (tenants of crown-lands) before the year 1789. Where and when could the barons obtain the million their farmers have advanced to them ? Before 1789 the tenure of the fiefs subject to the castle of Guaisnic was still worth fifty thousand francs a year ; but a vote of the National Assembly suppressed the seigneurs' dues levied on inheritance.

In such a situation this family — of absolutely no account in France, and which would be a subject of laughter in Paris, were it known there — is to Guérande the whole of Brittany. In Guérande the Baron du Guaisnic is one of the great barons of France, a man above whom there is but one man, — the King of

France, once elected ruler. To-day the name of du Guaisnic, full of Breton significances (the roots of which will be found explained in "The Chouans") has been subjected to the same alteration which disfigures that of du Guaisqlain. The tax-gatherer now writes the name, as do the rest of the world, du Guénic.

At the end of a silent, damp, and gloomy lane may be seen the arch of a door, or rather gate, high enough and wide enough to admit a man on horseback, — a circumstance which proves of itself that when this building was erected carriages did not exist. The arch, supported by two jambs, is of granite. The gate, of oak, rugged as the bark of the tree itself, is studded with enormous nails placed in geometric figures. The arch is semicircular. On it are carved the arms of the Guaisnics as clean-cut and clear as though the sculptor had just laid down his chisel. This escutcheon would delight a lover of the heraldic art by a simplicity which proves the pride and the antiquity of the family. It is as it was in the days when the crusaders of the Christian world invented these symbols by which to recognize each other; the Guaisnics have never had it quartered; it is always itself, like that of the house of France, which connoisseurs find inescutcheoned in the shields of many of the old families. Here it is, such as you may see it still at Guérande: Gules, a hand proper gonfaloned ermine, with a sword argent in pale, and the terrible motto, *FAC*. Is not that a grand and noble thing? The circlet of a baronial coronet surmounts this simple escutcheon, the vertical lines of which, used in carving to represent gules, are clear as ever. The artist has given I know not what

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proud, chivalrous turn to the hand. With what vigor it holds the sword which served but recently the present family!

If you go to Guérande after reading this history you cannot fail to quiver when you see that blazon. Yes, the most confirmed republican would be moved by the fidelity, the nobleness, the grandeur hidden in the depths of that dark lane. The du Guaisnics did well yesterday, and they are ready to do well to-morrow. To do is the motto of chivalry. "You did well in the battle" was the praise of the Connétable *par excellence*, the great du Guesclin who drove the English for a time from France. The depth of this carving, which has been protected from the weather by the projecting edges of the arch, is in keeping with the moral depth of the motto in the soul of this family. To those who know the Guaisnics this fact is touching.

The gate when open gives a vista into a somewhat vast court-yard, on the right of which are the stables, on the left the kitchen and offices. The house is built of freestone from cellar to garret. The façade on the court-yard has a portico with a double range of steps, the wall of which is covered with vestiges of carvings now effaced by time, but in which the eye of an antiquary can still make out in the centre of the principal mass the Hand bearing the sword. The granite steps are now disjointed, grasses have forced their way with little flowers and mosses through the fissures between the stones which centuries have displaced without however lessening their solidity. The door of the house must have had a charming character. As far as the relics of the old designs allow us to judge, it was done

by an artist of the great Venetian school of the thirteenth century. Here is a mixture, still visible, of the Byzantine and the Saracenic. It is crowned with a circular pediment, now wreathed with vegetation, — a bouquet, rose, brown, yellow, or blue, according to the season. The door, of oak, nail-studded, gives entrance to a noble hall, at the end of which is another door, opening upon another portico which leads to the garden.

This hall is marvellously well preserved. The panelled wainscot, about three feet high, is of chestnut. A magnificent Spanish leather with figures in relief, the gilding now peeled off or reddened, covers the walls. The ceiling is of wooden boards artistically joined and painted and gilded. The gold is scarcely noticeable; it is in the same condition as that of the Cordova leather, but a few red flowers and the green foliage can still be distinguished. Perhaps a thorough cleaning might bring out paintings like those discovered on the plank ceilings of Tristan's house at Tours. If so, it would prove that those planks were placed or restored in the reign of Louis XI. The chimney-piece is enormous, of carved stone, and within it are gigantic andirons in wrought-iron of precious workmanship. It could hold a cart-load of wood. The furniture of this hall is wholly of oak, each article bearing upon it the arms of the family. Three English guns equally suitable for chase or war, three sabres, two game-bags, the utensils of a huntsman and a fisherman hang from nails upon the wall.

On one side is a dining-room, which connects with the kitchen by a door cut through a corner tower.

This tower corresponds in the design of the façade toward the court-yard with another tower at the opposite corner, in which is a spiral staircase leading to the two upper stories.

The dining-room is hung with tapestries of the fourteenth century; the style and the orthography of the inscription on the banderols beneath each figure prove their age, but being, as they are, in the naïve language of the *fabliaux*, it is impossible to transcribe them here. These tapestries, well preserved in those parts where light has scarcely penetrated, are framed in bands of oak now black as ebony. The ceiling has projecting rafters enriched with foliage which is varied for each rafter; the space between them is filled with planks painted blue, on which twine garlands of golden flowers. Two old buffets face each other; on their shelves, rubbed with Breton persistency by Mariotte the cook, can be seen, as in the days when kings were as poor in 1200 as the du Guaisnics are in 1830, four old goblets, an ancient embossed soup-tureen, and two salt-cellars, all of silver; also many pewter plates and many pitchers of gray and blue pottery, bearing arabesque designs and the arms of the du Guaisnics, covered by hinged pewter lids. The chimney-piece is modernized. Its condition proves that the family has lived in this room for the last century. It is of carved stone in the style of the Louis XV. period, and is ornamented with a mirror, let in to the back with a gilt beaded moulding. This anachronism, to which the family is indifferent, would grieve a poet. On the mantel-shelf, covered with red velvet, is a tall clock of tortoise-shell inlaid with brass, flanked on each side

with a silver candelabrum of singular design. A large square table, with solid legs, fills the centre of this room; the chairs are of turned wood covered with tapestry. On a round table supported by a single leg made in the shape of a vine-shoot, which stands before a window looking into the garden, is a lamp of an odd kind. This lamp has a common glass globe, about the size of an ostrich egg, which is fastened into a candlestick by a glass tube. Through a hole at the top of the globe issues a wick which passes through a sort of reed of brass, drawing the nut-oil held in the globe through its own length coiled like a tape-worm in a surgeon's phial. The windows which look into the garden, like those that look upon the court-yard, are mullioned in stone with hexagonal leaded panes, and are draped by curtains, with heavy valances and stout cords, of an ancient stuff of crimson silk with gold reflections, called in former days either brocatelle or small brocade.

On each of the two upper stories of the house there are but two rooms. The first is the bedroom of the head of the family, the second is that of the children. Guests were lodged in chambers beneath the roof. The servants slept above the kitchens and stables. The pointed roof, protected with lead at its angles and edges, has a noble pointed window on each side, one looking down upon the court-yard, the other on the garden. These windows, rising almost to the level of the roof, have slender, delicate casings, the carvings of which have crumbled under the salty vapors of the atmosphere. Above the arch of each window with its crossbars of stone, still grinds, as it turns, the vane of a noble.

Let us not forget a precious detail, full of naïveté, which will be of value in the eyes of an archæologist. The tower in which the spiral staircase goes up is placed at the corner of a great gable wall in which there is no window. The staircase comes down to a little arched door, opening upon a gravelled yard which separates the house from the stables. This tower is repeated on the garden side by another of five sides, ending in a cupola in which is a bell-turret, instead of being roofed, like the sister-tower, with a pepper-pot. This is how those charming architects varied the symmetry of their sky-lines. These towers are connected on the level of the first upper floor by a stone gallery, supported by what we must call brackets, each ending in a grotesque human head. This gallery has a balustrade of exquisite workmanship. From the gable above depends a stone dais like those that crown the statues of saints at the portal of churches. Can you not see a woman walking in the morning along this balcony and gazing over Guérande at the sunshine, where it gilds the sands and shimmers on the breast of Ocean? Do you not admire that gable wall flanked at its angles with those varied towers? The opposite gable of the Guaisnic mansion adjoins the next house. The harmony so carefully sought by the architects of those days is maintained in the façade looking on the court-yard by the tower which communicates between the dining-room and the kitchen, and is the same as the staircase tower, except that it stops at the first upper story and its summit is a small open dome, beneath which stands a now blackened statue of Saint Calyste.

The garden is magnificent for so old a place. It

covers half an acre of ground, its walls are all espaliered, and the space within is divided into squares for vegetables, bordered with cordons of fruit-trees, which the man-of-all-work, named Gasselin, takes care of in the intervals of grooming the horses. At the farther end of the garden is a grotto with a seat in it; in the middle, a sun-dial; the paths are gravelled. The façade on the garden side has no towers corresponding to those on the court-yard; but a slender spiral column rises from the ground to the roof, which must in former days have borne the banner of the family, for at its summit may still be seen an iron socket, from which a few weak plants are straggling. This detail, in harmony with the vestiges of sculpture, proves to a practised eye that the mansion was built by a Venetian architect. The graceful staff is like a signature revealing Venice, chivalry, and the exquisite delicacy of the thirteenth century. If any doubts remained on this point, a feature of the ornamentation would dissipate them. The trefoils of the hôtel du Guaisnic have four leaves instead of three. This difference plainly indicates the Venetian school depraved by its commerce with the East, where the semi-Saracenic architects, careless of the great catholic thought, give four leaves to clover, while Christian art is faithful to the Trinity. In this respect Venetian art became heretical.

If this ancient dwelling attracts your imagination, you may perhaps ask yourself why such miracles of art are not renewed in the present day. Because to-day mansions are sold, pulled down, and the ground they stood on turned into streets. No one can be sure that the next generation will possess the paternal dwelling;

homes are no more than inns; whereas in former times when a dwelling was built men worked, or thought they worked, for a family in perpetuity. Hence the grandeur of these houses. Faith in self, as well as faith in God, did prodigies.

As for the arrangement of the upper rooms they may be imagined after this description of the ground-floor, and after reading an account of the manners, customs, and physiognomy of the family. For the last fifty years the du Guainics have received their friends in the two rooms just described, in which, as in the court-yard and the external accessories of the building, the spirit, grace, and candor of the old and noble Brittany still survives. Without the topography and description of the town, and without this minute depicting of the house, the surprising figures of the family might be less understood. Therefore the frames have preceded the portraits. Every one is aware that things influence beings. There are public buildings whose effect is visible upon the persons living in their neighborhood. It would be difficult indeed to be irreligious in the shadow of a cathedral like that of Bourges. When the soul is everywhere reminded of its destiny by surrounding images, it is less easy to fail of it. Such was the thought of our immediate grandfathers, abandoned by a generation which was soon to have no signs and no distinctions, and whose manners and morals were to change every decade. If you do not now expect to find the Baron du Guainic sword in hand, all here written would be falsehood.

II.

THE BARON, HIS WIFE, AND SISTER.

EARLY in the month of May, in the year 1836, the period when this scene opens, the family of Guénic (we follow henceforth the modern spelling) consisted of Monsieur and Madame du Guénic, Mademoiselle du Guénic the baron's elder sister, and an only son, aged twenty-one, named, after an ancient family usage, Gaudebert-Calyste-Louis. The father's name was Gaudebert-Çalyste-Charles. Only the last name was ever varied. Saint Gaudebert and Saint Calyste were forever bound to protect the Guénics.

The Baron du Guénic had started from Guérande the moment that La Vendée and Brittany took arms; he fought through the war with Charette, with Cathelineau, La Rochejaquelein, d'Elbée, Bonchamps, and the Prince de Loudon. Before starting he had, with a prudence unique in revolutionary annals, sold his whole property of every kind to his elder and only sister, Mademoiselle Zéphirine du Guénic. After the death of all those heroes of the West, the baron, preserved by a miracle from ending as they did, refused to submit to Napoleon. He fought on till 1802, when being at last defeated and almost captured, he returned to Guérande, and from Guérande went to Croisic, whence he crossed to Ireland, faithful to the ancient Breton hatred for England.

The people of Guérande feigned utter ignorance of the baron's existence. In the whole course of twenty years not a single indiscreet word was ever uttered. Mademoiselle du Guénic received the rents and sent them to her brother by fishermen. Monsieur du Guénic returned to Guérande in 1813, as quietly and simply as if he had merely passed a season at Nantes. During his stay in Dublin the old Breton, despite his fifty years, had fallen in love with a charming Irish woman, daughter of one of the noblest and poorest families of that unhappy kingdom. Fanny O'Brien was then twenty-one years old. The Baron du Guénic came over to France to obtain the documents necessary for his marriage, returned to Ireland, and, after about ten months (at the beginning of 1814), brought his wife to Guérande, where she gave him Calyste on the very day that Louis XVIII. landed at Calais, — a circumstance which explains the young man's final name of Louis.

The old and loyal Breton was now a man of seventy-three; but his long-continued guerilla warfare with the Republic, his exile, the perils of his five crossings through a turbulent sea in open boats, had weighed upon his head, and he looked a hundred; therefore, at no period had the chief of the house of Guénic been more in keeping with the worn-out grandeur of their dwelling, built in the days when a court reigned at Guérande.

Monsieur de Guénic was a tall, straight, wiry, lean old man. His oval face was lined with innumerable wrinkles, which formed a net-work over his cheek-bones and above his eyebrows, giving to his face a resem-

blance to those choice old men whom Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Miéris, and Gérard Dow so loved to paint, in pictures which need a microscope to be fully appreciated. His countenance might be said to be snaken out of sight beneath those innumerable wrinkles, produced by a life in the open air and by the habit of watching the country in the full light of the sun from the rising of that luminary to the sinking of it. Nevertheless, to an observer enough remained of the imperishable forms of the human face which appealed to the soul, even though the eye could see no more than a lifeless head. The firm outline of the face, the shape of the brow, the solemnity of the lines, the rigidity of the nose, the form of the bony structure which wounds alone had slightly altered, — all were signs of intrepidity without calculation, faith without reserve, obedience without discussion, fidelity without compromise, love without inconstancy. In him, the Breton granite was made man.

The baron had no longer any teeth. His lips, once red, now violet, and backed by hard gums only (with which he ate the bread his wife took care to soften by folding it daily in a damp napkin), drew inward to the mouth with a sort of grin, which gave him an expression both threatening and proud. His chin seemed to seek his nose; but in that nose, humped in the middle, lay the signs of his energy and his Breton resistance. His skin, marbled with red blotches appearing through his wrinkles, showed a powerfully sanguine temperament, fitted to resist fatigue and to preserve him, as no doubt it did, from apoplexy. The head was crowned with abundant hair, as white as silver, which fell in

curls upon his shoulders. The face, extinguished, as we have said, in part, lived through the glitter of the black eyes in their brown orbits, casting thence the last flames of a generous and loyal soul. The eyebrows and lashes had disappeared; the skin, grown hard, could not nnwrinkle. The difficulty of shaving had obliged the old man to let his beard grow, and the cut of it was fan-shaped. An artist would have admired beyond all else in this old lion of Brittany with his powerful shoulders and vigorous chest, the splendid hands of the soldier, — hands like those du Guesclin must have had, large, broad, hairy; hands that once had clasped the sword never, like Joan of Arc, to relinquish it until the royal standard floated in the cathedral of Rheims; hands that were often bloody from the thorns and furze of the Bocage; hands which had pulled an oar in the Marais to surprise the Blues, or in the offing to signal Georges; the hands of a guerilla, a cannoneer, a common soldier, a leader; hands still white though the Bourbons of the Elder branch were again in exile. Looking at those hands attentively, one might have seen some recent marks attesting the fact that the Baron had recently joined MADAME in La Vendée. To-day that fact may be admitted. These hands were a living commentary on the noble motto to which no Guénié had proved recreant: *Fac!*

His forehead attracted attention by the golden tones of the temples, contrasting with the brown tints of the hard and narrow brow, which the falling off of the hair had somewhat broadened, giving still more majesty to that noble ruin. The countenance — a little material,

perhaps, but how could it be otherwise?—presented, like all the Breton faces grouped about the baron, a certain savagery, a stolid calm which resembled the impassibility of the Huguenots; something, one might say, stupid, due perhaps to the utter repose which follows extreme fatigue, in which the animal nature alone is visible. Thought was rare. It seemed to be an effort; its seat was in the heart more than in the head; it led to acts rather than ideas. But, examining that grand old man with sustained observation, one could penetrate the mystery of this strange contradiction to the spirit of the century. He had faiths, sentimeuts, inborn so to speak, which allowed him to dispense with thought. His duty, life had taught him. Institutions and religion thought for him. He reserved his mind, he and his kind, for action, not dissipating it on useless things which occupied the minds of other persons. He drew his thought from his heart like his sword from its scabbard, holding it aloft in his ermined hand, as on his scutcheon, shining with sincerity. That secret once penetrated, all is clear. We can comprehend the depth of convictions that are not thoughts, but living principles, — clear, distinct, downright, and as immaculate as the ermine itself. We understand that sale made to his sister before the war; which provided for all, and faced all, death, confiscation, exile. The beauty of the character of these two old people (for the sister lived only for and by the brother) cannot be understood to its full extent by the light of the selfish morals, the uncertain aims, and the inconstancy of this our epoch. An archangel, charged with the duty of penetrating to the inmost recesses of

their hearts could not have found one thought of personal interest. In 1814, when the rector of Guérande suggested to the baron that he should go to Paris and claim his recompense from the triumphant Bourbons, the old sister, so saving and miserly for the household, cried out: —

“Oh, fy! does my brother need to hold out his hand like a beggar?”

“It would be thought I served the king from interest,” said the old man. “Besides, it is for him to remember. Poor king! he must be weary indeed of those who harass him. If he gave them all France in bits, they still would ask.”

This loyal servant, who had spent his life and means on Louis XVIII., received the rank of colonel, the cross of Saint-Louis, and a stipend of two thousand francs a year.

“The king did remember!” he said when the news reached him.

No one undeceived him. The gift was really made by the Duc de Feltre. But, as an act of gratitude to the king, the baron sustained a siege at Guérande against the forces of General Travot. He refused to surrender the fortress, and when it was absolutely necessary to evacuate it he escaped into the woods with a band of Chouans, who continued armed until the second restoration of the Bourbons. Guérande still treasures the memory of that siege.

We must admit that the Baron du Guénic was illiterate as a peasant. He could read, write, and do some little ciphering; he knew the military art and heraldry, but, excepting always his prayer-book, he had not read

three volumes in the course of his life. His clothing, which is not an insignificant point, was invariably the same; it consisted of stout shoes, ribbed stockings, breeches of greenish velveteen, a cloth waistcoat, and a loose coat with a collar, from which hung the cross of Saint-Louis. A noble serenity now reigned upon that face where, for the last year or so, sleep, the forerunner of death, seemed to be preparing him for rest eternal. This constant somnolence, becoming daily more and more frequent, did not alarm either his wife, his blind sister, or his friends, whose medical knowledge was of the slightest. To them these solemn pauses of a life without reproach, but very weary, were naturally explained: the baron had done his duty, that was all.

In this ancient mansion the absorbing interests were the fortunes of the dispossessed Elder branch. The future of the exiled Bourbons, that of the Catholic religion, the influence of political innovations on Brittany were the exclusive topics of conversation in the baron's family. There was but one personal interest mingled with these most absorbing ones: the attachment of all for the only son, for Calyste, the heir, the sole hope of the great name of the du Guénics.

The old Vendéan, the old Chouan, had, some years previously, a return of his own youth in order to train his son to those manly exercises which were proper for a gentleman liable to be summoned at any moment to take arms. No sooner was Calyste sixteen years of age than his father accompanied him to the marshes and the forest, teaching him through the pleasures of the chase the rudiments of war, preaching by example, indifferent to fatigue, firm in his saddle, sure of his

shot whatever the game might be, — deer, hare, or a bird on the wing, — intrepid in face of obstacles, bidding his son follow him into danger as though he had ten other sons to take Calyste's place.

So, when the Duchesse de Berry landed in France to conquer back the kingdom for her son, the father judged it right to take his boy to join her, and put in practice the motto of their ancestors. The baron started in the dead of night, saying no word to his wife, who might perhaps have weakened him; taking his son under fire as if to a fête, and Gasselin, his only vassal, who followed him joyfully. The three men of the family were absent six months without sending news of their whereabouts to the baroness, who never read the "Quotidienne" without trembling from line to line, nor to his old blind sister, heroically erect, whose nerve never faltered for an instant as she heard that paper read. The three guns hanging to the walls had therefore seen service recently. The baron, who considered the enterprise useless, left the region before the affair of La Pénissière, or the house of Guénic would probably have ended in that hecatomb.

When, on a stormy night after parting from MADAME, the father, son, and servant returned to the house in Guérande, they took their friends and the baroness and old Mademoiselle de Guénic by surprise, although the latter, by the exercise of senses with which the blind are gifted, recognized the steps of the three men in the little lane leading to the house. The baron looked round upon the circle of his anxious friends, who were seated beside the little table lighted by the antique lamp, and said in a tremulous voice, while

Gasselin replaced the three guns and the sabres in their places, these words of feudal simplicity : —

“ The barons did not all do their duty.”

Then, having kissed his wife and sister, he sat down in his old arm-chair and ordered supper to be brought for his son, for Gasselin, and for himself. Gasselin had thrown himself before Calyste on one occasion, to protect him, and received the cut of a sabre on his shoulder ; but so simple a matter did it seem that even the women scarcely thanked him. The baron and his guests uttered neither curses nor complaints of their conquerors. Such silence is a trait of Breton character. In forty years no one ever heard a word of contumely from the baron's lips about his adversaries. It was for them to do their duty as he did his. This utter silence is the surest indication of an unalterable will.

This last effort, the flash of an energy now waning, had caused the present weakness and somnolence of the old man. The fresh defeat and exile of the Bourbons, as miraculously driven out as miraculously re-established, were to him a source of bitter sadness.

About six o'clock in the evening of the day on which this history begins, the baron, who, according to ancient custom, had finished dining by four o'clock, fell asleep as usual while his wife was reading to him the “ *Quotidienne*.” His head rested against the back of the arm-chair which stood beside the fireplace on the garden side.

Near this gnarled trunk of an ancient tree, and in front of the fireplace, the baroness, seated on one of the antique chairs, presented the type of those adorable

women who exist in England, Scotland, or Ireland only. There alone are born those milk-white creatures with golden hair the curls of which are wound by the hands of angels, for the light of heaven seems to ripple in their silken spirals swaying to the breeze. Fanny O'Brien was one of those sylphs, — strong in tenderness, invincible under misfortune, soft as the music of her voice, pure as the azure of her eyes, of a delicate, refined beauty, blessed with a skin that was silken to the touch and caressing to the eye, which neither painter's brush nor written word can picture. Beautiful still at forty-two years of age, many a man would have thought it happiness to marry her as he looked at the splendors of that autumn coloring, redundant in flowers and fruit, refreshed and refreshing with the dews of heaven.

The baroness held the paper in a dimpled hand, the fingers of which curved slightly backward, their nails cut square like those of an antique statue. Half lying, without ill-grace or affectation, in her chair, her feet stretched out to warm them, she was dressed in a gown of black velvet, for the weather was now becoming chilly. The corsage, rising to the throat, moulded the splendid contour of the shoulders and the rich bosom which the suckling of her son had not deformed. Her hair was worn in *ringlets*, after the English fashion, down her cheeks; the rest was simply twisted to the crown of her head and held there with a tortoise-shell comb. The color, not undecided in tone as other blond hair, sparkled to the light like a filagree of burnished gold. The baroness always braided the short locks curling on the nape of her neck — which are a

sign of race. This tiny braid, concealed in the mass of hair always carefully put up, allowed the eye to follow with delight the undulating line by which her neck was set upon her shoulders. This little detail will show the care which she gave to her person; it was her pride to rejoice the eyes of the old baron. What a charming, delicate attention! When you see a woman displaying in her own home the coquetry which most women spend on a single sentiment, believe me, that woman is as noble a mother as she is a wife; she is the joy and the flower of the home; she knows her obligations as a woman; in her soul, in her tenderness, you will find her outward graces; she is doing good in secret; she worships, she adores without a calculation of return; she loves her fellows, as she loves God, — for their own sakes. And so one might fancy that the Virgin of paradise, under whose care she lived, had rewarded the chaste girlhood and the sacred life of the old man's wife by surrounding her with a sort of halo which preserved her beauty from the wrongs of time. The alterations of that beauty Plato would have glorified as the coming of new graces. Her skin, so milk-white once, had taken the warm and pearly tones which painters adore. Her broad and finely modelled brow caught lovingly the light which played on its polished surface. Her eyes, of a turquoise blue, shone with unequalled sweetness; the soft lashes, and the slightly sunken temples inspired the spectator with I know not what mute melancholy. The nose, which was aquiline and thin, recalled the royal origin of the high-born woman. The pure lips, finely cut, wore happy smiles, brought there by loving-kindness inexhaustible. Her

teeth were small and white; she had gained of late a slight embonpoint, but her delicate hips and slender waist were none the worse for it. The autumn of her beauty presented a few perennial flowers of her spring-tide among the richer blooms of summer. Her arms became more nobly rounded, her lustrous skin took a finer grain; the outlines of her form gained plenitude. Lastly and best of all, her open countenance, serene and slightly rosy, the purity of her blue eyes, that a look too eager might have wounded, expressed illimitable sympathy, the tenderness of angels.

At the other chimney-corner, in an arm-chair, the octogenarian sister, like in all points save clothes to her brother, sat listening to the reading of the newspaper and knitting stockings, a work for which sight is needless. Both eyes had cataracts; but she obstinately refused to submit to an operation, in spite of the entreaties of her sister-in-law. The secret reason of that obstinacy was known to herself only; she declared it was want of courage; but the truth was that she would not let her brother spend twenty-five louis for her benefit. That sum would have been so much the less for the good of the household.

These two old persons brought out in fine relief the beauty of the baroness. Mademoiselle Zéphirine, being deprived of sight, was not aware of the changes which eighty years had wrought in her features. Her pale, hollow face, to which the fixedness of the white and sightless eyes gave almost the appearance of death, and three or four solitary and projecting teeth made menacing, was framed by a little hood of brown printed cotton, quilted like a petticoat, trimmed with a

cotton ruche, and tied beneath the chin by strings which were always a little rusty. She wore a *cotillon*, or short skirt of coarse cloth, over a quilted petticoat (a positive mattress, in which were secreted double louis-d'ors), and pockets sewn to a belt which she unfastened every night and put on every morning like a garment. Her body was encased in the *casquin* of Brittany, a species of spencer made of the same cloth as the *cotillon*, adorned with a collarette of many pleats, the washing of which caused the only dispute she ever had with her sister-in-law, — her habit being to change it only once a week. From the large wadded sleeves of the *casquin* issued two withered but still vigorous arms, at the ends of which flourished her hands, their brownish-red color making the white arms look like poplar-wood. These hands, hooked or contracted from the habit of knitting, might be called a stocking-machine incessantly at work; the phenomenon would have been had they stopped. From time to time Mademoiselle du Guénic took a long knitting-needle which she kept in the bosom of her gown, and passed it between her hood and her hair to poke or scratch her white locks. A stranger would have laughed to see the careless manner in which she thrust back the needle without the slightest fear of wounding herself. She was straight as a steeple. Her erect and imposing carriage might pass for one of those coquetries of old age which prove that pride is a necessary passion of life. Her smile was gay. She, too, had done her duty.

As soon as the baroness saw that her husband was asleep she stopped reading. A ray of sunshine,

stretching from one window to the other, divided by a golden band the atmosphere of that old room and bur-nished the now black furniture. The light touched the carvings of the ceiling, danced on the time-worn chests, spread its shining cloth on the old oak table, enlivening the still, brown room, as Fanny's voice cast into the heart of her octogenarian blind sister a music as luminous and as cheerful as that ray of sunlight. Soon the ray took on the ruddy colors which, by in-sensible gradations, sank into the melancholy tones of twilight. The baroness also sank into a deep medita-tion, one of those total silences which her sister-in-law had noticed for the last two weeks, trying to explain them to herself, but making no inquiry. The old woman studied the causes of this unusual pre-occupation, as blind persons, in whose soul sound lingers like a divin-ing echo, read books in which the pages are black and the letters white. Mademoiselle Zéphirine, to whom the dark hour now meant nothing, continued to knit, and the silence at last became so deep that the clicking of her knitting-needles was plainly heard.

“ You have dropped the paper, sister, but you are not asleep,” said the old woman, slyly.

At this moment Mariotte came in to light the lamp, which she placed on a square table in front of the fire ; then she fetched her distaff, her ball of thread, and a small stool, on which she seated herself in the recess of a window and began as usual to spin. Gasselin was still busy about the offices ; he looked to the horses of the baron and Calyste, saw that the stable was in order for the night, and gave the two fine hunting-dogs their daily meal. The joyful barking of the

animals was the last noise that awakened the echoes slumbering among the darksome walls of the ancient house. The two dogs and the two horses were the only remaining vestiges of the splendors of its chivalry. An imaginative man seated on the steps of the portico and letting himself fall into the poesy of the still living images of that dwelling, might have quivered as he heard the baying of the hounds and the trampling of the neighing horses.

Gasselin was one of those short, thick, squat little Bretons, with black hair and sun-browned faces, silent, slow, and obstinate as mules, but always following steadily the path marked out for them. He was forty-two years old, and had been twenty-five years in the household. Mademoiselle had hired him when he was fifteen, on hearing of the marriage and probable return of the baron. This retainer considered himself as part of the family; he had played with Calyste, he loved the horses and dogs of the house, and talked to them and petted them as though they were his own. He wore a blue linen jacket with little pockets flapping about his hips, waistcoat and trousers of the same material at all seasons, blue stockings, and stout hob-nailed shoes. When it was cold or rainy he put on a goat's-skin, after the fashion of his country.

Mariotte, who was also over forty, was as a woman what Gasselin was as a man. No team could be better matched, — same complexion, same figure, same little eyes that were lively and black. It is difficult to understand why Gasselin and Mariotte had never married; possibly it might have seemed immoral, they were so like brother and sister. Mariotte's wages

were ninety francs a year; Gasselins, three hundred. But thousands of francs offered to them elsewhere would not have induced either to leave the Guénic household. Both were under the orders of Mademoiselle, who, from the time of the war in La Vendée to the period of her brother's return, had ruled the house. When she learned that the baron was about to bring home a mistress, she had been moved to great emotion, believing that she must yield the sceptre of the household and abdicate in favor of the Baronne de Guénic, whose subject she was now compelled to be.

Mademoiselle Zéphirine was therefore agreeably surprised to find in Fanny O'Brien a young woman born to the highest rank, to whom the petty cares of a poor household were extremely distasteful, — one who, like other fine souls, would far have preferred to eat plain bread rather than the choicest food if she had to prepare it for herself; a woman capable of accomplishing all the duties, even the most painful, of humanity, strong under necessary privations, but without courage for commonplace avocations. When the baron begged his sister in his wife's name to continue in charge of the household, the old maid kissed the baroness like a sister; she made a daughter of her, she adored her, overjoyed to be left in control of the household, which she managed rigorously on a system of almost inconceivable economy, which was never relaxed except for some great occasion, such as the lying-in of her sister, and her nourishment, and all that concerned Calyste, the worshipped son of the whole household.

Though the two servants were accustomed to this stern régime, and no orders need ever have been given to them, for the interests of their masters were greater to their minds than their own, — *were* their own in fact, — Mademoiselle Zéphirine insisted on looking after everything. Her attention being never distracted, she knew, without going up to verify her knowledge, how large was the heap of nuts in the barn; and how many oats remained in the bin without plunging her sinewy arm into the depths of it. She carried at the end of a string fastened to the belt of her *casquin*, a boatswain's whistle, with which she was wont to summon Mariotte by one, and Gasselin by two notes.

Gasselin's greatest happiness was to cultivate the garden and produce fine fruits and vegetables. He had so little work to do that without this occupation he would certainly have felt lost. After he had groomed his horses in the morning, he polished the floors and cleaned the rooms on the ground-floor, then he went to his garden, where weed or damaging insect was never seen. Sometimes Gasselin was observed motionless, bare-headed, under a burning sun, watching for a field-mouse or the terrible grub of the cockchafer; then, as soon as it was caught, he would rush with the joy of a child to show his masters the noxious beast that had occupied his mind for a week. He took pleasure in going to Croisic on fast-days, to purchase a fish to be had for less money there than at Guérande.

Thus no household was ever more truly one, more united in interests, more bound together than this noble family sacredly devoted to its duty. Masters

and servants seemed made for one another. For twenty-five years there had been neither trouble nor discord. The only griefs were the petty ailments of the little boy, the only terrors were caused by the events of 1814 and those of 1830. If the same things were invariably done at the same hours, if the food was subjected to the regularity of times and seasons, this monotony, like that of Nature varied only by alterations of cloud and rain and sunshine, was sustained by the affection existing in the hearts of all, — the more fruitful, the more beneficent because it emanated from natural causes.

III.

THREE BRETON SILHOUETTES.

WHEN night had fairly fallen, Gasselin came into the hall and asked his master respectfully if he had further need of him.

“ You can go out, or go to bed, after prayers,” replied the baron, waking up, “ unless Madame or my sister — ”

The two ladies here made a sign of consent. Gasselin then knelt down, seeing that his masters rose to kneel upon their chairs; Mariotte also knelt before her stool. Mademoiselle du Guénic then said the prayer aloud. After it was over, some one rapped at the door on the lane. Gasselin went to open it.

“ I dare say it is Monsieur le curé; he usually comes first,” said Mariotte.

Every one now recognized the rector's foot on the resounding steps of the portico. He bowed respectfully to the three occupants of the room, and addressed them in phrases of that unctuous civility which priests are accustomed to use. To the rather absent-minded greeting of the mistress of the house, he replied by an ecclesiastically inquisitive look.

“ Are you anxious or ill, Madame la baronne? ” he asked.

“ Thank you, no, ” she replied.

Monsieur Grimont, a man of fifty, of middle height, lost in his cassock, from which issued two stout shoes with silver buckles, exhibited above his bands a plump visage, and a generally white skin though yellow in spots. His hands were dimpled. His abbatial face had something of the Dutch burgomaster in the placidity of its complexion and its flesh tones, and of the Breton peasant in the straight black hair and the vivacity of the brown eyes, which preserved, nevertheless, a priestly decorum. His gayety, that of a man whose conscience was calm and pure, admitted a joke. His manner had nothing uneasy or dogged about it, like that of many poor rectors whose existence or whose power is contested by their parishioners, and who instead of being, as Napoleon sublimely said, the moral leaders of the population and the natural justices of peace, are treated as enemies. Observing Monsieur Grimont as he marched through Guérande, the most irreligious of travellers would have recognized the sovereign of that Catholic town; but this same sovereign lowered his spiritual superiority before the feudal supremacy of the du Guénics. In their salon he was as a chaplain in his seigneur's house. In church, when he gave the benediction, his hand was always first stretched out toward the chapel belonging to the Guénics, where their mailed hand and their device were carved upon the key-stone of the arch.

“I thought that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had already arrived,” said the rector, sitting down, and taking the hand of the baroness to kiss it. “She is getting unpunctual. Can it be that the fashion of dissipation is contagious? I see that Monsieur le chevalier is again at Les Touches this evening.”

“Don't say anything about those visits before Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël,” cried the old maid, eagerly.

“Ah! mademoiselle,” remarked Mariotte, “you can't prevent the town from gossiping.”

“What do they say?” asked the baroness.

“The young girls and the old women all say that he is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches.”

“A lad of Calyste's make is playing his proper part in making the women love him,” said the baron.

“Here comes Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël,” said Mariotte.

The gravel in the court-yard crackled under the discreet footsteps of the coming lady, who was accompanied by a page supplied with a lantern. Seeing this lad, Mariotte removed her stool to the great hall for the purpose of talking with him by the gleam of his rush-light, which was burned at the cost of his rich and miserly mistress, thus economizing those of her own masters.

This elderly demoiselle was a thin, dried-up old maid, yellow as the parchment of a Parliament record, wrinkled as a lake ruffled by the wind, with gray eyes, large prominent teeth, and the hands of a man. She was rather short, a little crooked, possibly hump-backed; but no one had ever been inquisitive enough to ascertain the nature of her perfections or her imperfections. Dressed in the same style as Mademoiselle du Guénic, she stirred an enormous quantity of petticoats and linen whenever she wanted to find one or other of the two apertures of her gown through which she reached her pockets. The strangest jingling

of keys and money then echoed among her garments. She always wore, dangling from one side, the bunch of keys of a good housekeeper, and from the other her silver snuff-box, thimble, knitting-needles, and other implements that were also resonant. Instead of Mademoiselle Zéphirine's wadded hood, she wore a green bonnet, in which she may have visited her melons, for it had passed, like them, from green to yellowish; as for its shape, our present fashions are just now bringing it back to Paris, after twenty years absence, under the name of Bibi. This bonnet was constructed under her own eye and by the hands of her nieces, out of green Florence silk bought at Guérande, and an old bonnet-shape, renewed every five years at Nantes, — for Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël allowed her bonnets the longevity of a legislature. Her nieces also made her gowns, cut by an immutable pattern. The old lady still used the cane with the short hook that all women carried in the early days of Marie-Antoinette. She belonged to the very highest nobility of Brittany. Her arms bore the ermine of its ancient dukes. In her and in her sister the illustrious Breton house of the Pen-Hoëls ended. Her younger sister had married a Kergarouët, who, in spite of the deep disapproval of the whole region, added the name of Pen-Hoël to his own and called himself the Vicomte de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël.

“Heaven has punished him,” said the old lady; “he has nothing but daughters, and the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël name will be wiped out.”

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël possessed about seven thousand francs a year from the rental of lands.

She had come into her property at thirty-six years of age, and managed it herself, inspecting it on horse-back, and displaying on all points the firmness of character which is noticeable in most deformed persons. Her avarice was admired by the whole country round, never meeting with the slightest disapproval. She kept one woman-servant and the page. Her yearly expenses, not including taxes, did not amount to over a thousand francs. Consequently, she was the object of the cajoleries of the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, who passed the winters at Nantes, and the summers at their estate on the banks of the Loire below l'Indret. She was supposed to be ready to leave her fortune and her savings to whichever of her nieces pleased her best. Every three months one or other of the four demoiselles de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël, (the youngest of whom was twelve, and the eldest twenty years of age) came to spend a few days with her.

A friend of Zéphirine du Guénic, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, brought up to adore the Breton grandeur of the du Guénics, had formed, ever since the birth of Calyste, the plan of transmitting her property to the chevalier by marrying him to whichever of her nieces the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël, their mother, would bestow upon him. She dreamed of buying back some of the best of the Guénic property from the farmer *engagistes*. When avarice has an object it ceases to be a vice; it becomes a means of virtue; its privations are a perpetual offering; it has the grandeur of an intention beneath its meannesses. Perhaps Zéphirine was in the secret of Jacqueline's intention. Perhaps even the baroness, whose whole soul was

occupied by love for her son and tenderness for his father, may have guessed it as she saw with what wily perseverance Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël brought with her her favorite niece, Charlotte de Kergarouët, now sixteen years of age. The rector, Monsieur Grimont, was certainly in her confidence; it was he who helped the old maid to invest her savings.

But Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël might have had three hundred thousand francs in gold, she might have had ten times the landed property she actually possessed, and the du Guénics would never have allowed themselves to pay her the slightest attention that the old woman could construe as looking to her fortune. From a feeling of truly Breton pride, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, glad of the supremacy accorded to her old friend Zéphirine and the du Guénics, always showed herself honored by her relations with Madame du Guénic and her sister-in-law. She even went so far as to conceal the sort of sacrifice to which she consented every evening in allowing her page to burn in the Guénic hall that singular gingerbread-colored candle called an *oribus* which is still used in certain parts of western France.

Thus this rich old maid was nobility, pride, and grandeur personified. At the moment when you are reading this portrait of her, the Abbé Grimont has just indiscreetly revealed that on the evening when the old baron, the young chevalier, and Gasselin secretly departed to join MADAME (to the terror of the baroness and the great joy of all Bretons) Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had given the baron ten thousand francs in gold, — an immense sacrifice, to which the abbé added

another ten thousand, a tithe collected by him, — charging the old hero to offer the whole, in the name of the Pen-Hoëls and of the parish of Guérande, to the mother of Henri V.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël treated Calyste as if she felt that her intentions gave her certain rights over him; her plans seemed to authorize a supervision. Not that her ideas were strict in the matter of gallantry, for she had, in fact, the usual indulgence of the old women of the old school, but she held in horror the modern ways of revolutionary morals. Calyste, who might have gained in her estimation by a few adventures with Breton girls, would have lost it considerably had she seen him entangled in what she called innovations. She might have disinterred a little gold to pay for the results of a love-affair, but if Calyste had driven a tilbury or talked of a visit to Paris she would have thought him dissipated, and declared him a spendthrift. Impossible to say what she might not have done had she found him reading novels or an impious newspaper. To her, novel ideas meant the overthrow of succession of crops, ruin under the name of improvements and methods; in short, mortgaged lands as the inevitable result of experiments. To her, prudence was the true method of making your fortune; good management consisted in filling your granaries with wheat, rye, and flax, and waiting for a rise at the risk of being called a monopolist, and clinging to those grain-sacks obstinately. By singular chance she had often made lucky sales which confirmed her principles. She was thought to be maliciously clever, but in fact she was not

quick witted ; on the other hand, being as methodical as a Dutchman, prudent as a cat, and persistent as a priest, those qualities in a region of routine like Brittany were, practically, the equivalent of intellect.

“ Will Monsieur du Halga join us this evening ? ” asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, taking off her knitted mittens after the usual exchange of greetings.

“ Yes, mademoiselle ; I met him taking his dog to walk on the mall,” replied the rector.

“ Ha ! then our *mouche* will be lively to-night. Last evening we were only four.”

At the word *mouche* the rector rose and took from a drawer in one of the tall chests a small round basket made of fine osier, a pile of ivory counters yellow as a Turkish pipe after twenty years' usage, and a pack of cards as greasy as those of the custom-house officers at Saint-Nazaire, who change them only once in two weeks. These the abbé brought to the table, arranging the proper number of counters before each player, and putting the basket in the centre of the table beside the lamp, with infantine eagerness, and the manner of a man accustomed to perform this little service.

A knock at the outer gate given firmly in military fashion echoed through the stillness of the ancient mansion. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's page went gravely to open the door, and presently the long, lean, methodically clothed person of the Chevalier du Halga, former flag captain to Admiral de Kergarouët, defined itself in black on the penumbra of the portico.

“ Welcome, chevalier ! ” cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

“ The altar is raised,” said the abbé.

The chevalier was a man in poor health, who wore flannel for his rheumatism, a black-silk skull-cap to protect his head from fog, and a spencer to guard his precious chest from the sudden gusts which freshen the atmosphere of Guérande. He always went armed with a gold-headed cane to drive away the dogs who paid untimely court to a favorite little bitch who usually accompanied him. This man, fussy as a fine lady, worried by the slightest *contretemps*, speaking low to spare his voice, had been in his early days one of the most intrepid and most competent officers of the old navy. He had won the confidence of de Suffren in the Indian Ocean, and the friendship of the Comte de Portenduère. His splendid conduct while flag-captain to Admiral Kergaronet was written in visible letters on his scarred face. To see him now no one would have imagined the voice that ruled the storm, the eye that compassed the sea, the courage, indomitable, of the Breton sailor.

The chevalier never smoked, never swore; he was gentle and tranquil as a girl, as much concerned about his little dog Thisbe and her caprices as though he were an elderly dowager. In this way he gave a high idea of his departed gallantry, but he never so much as alluded to the deeds of surpassing bravery which had astonished the doughty old admiral, Comte d'Estaing. Though his manner was that of an invalid, and he walked as if stepping on eggs and complained about the sharpness of the wind or the heat of the sun, or the dampness of the misty atmosphere, he exhibited a set of the whitest teeth in the reddest of gums, — a fact reassuring as to his maladies, which were, however,

rather expensive, consisting as they did of four daily meals of monastic amplitude. His bodily frame, like that of the baron, was bony, and indestructibly strong, and covered with a parchment glued to his bones as the skin of an Arab horse on the muscles which shine in the sun. His skin retained the tawny color it received in India, whence, however, he did not bring back either facts or ideas. He had emigrated with the rest of his friends, lost his property, and was now ending his days with the cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of two thousand francs, as the legal reward of his services, paid from the fund of the Invalides de la Marine. The slight hypochondria which made him invent his imaginary ills is easily explained by his actual sufferings during the emigration. He served in the Russian navy until the day when the Emperor Alexander ordered him to be employed against France; he then resigned and went to live at Odessa, near the Duc de Richelieu, with whom he returned to France. It was the duke who obtained for this glorious relic of the old Breton navy the pension which enabled him to live. On the death of Louis XVIII. he returned to Guérande, and became, after a while, mayor of the city.

The rector, the chevalier, and Mademoiselle de Pen Hoël had regularly passed their evenings for the last fifteen years at the hôtel du Guénic, where the other noble personages of the town and neighborhood also came. It will readily be understood that the du Guénics were at the head of the faubourg Saint-Germain of the old Breton province, where no member of

the new administration sent down by the new government was ever allowed to penetrate. For the last six years the rector coughed when he came to the crucial words, *Domine, saluum fac regem*. Politics were still at that point in Guérande.

IV.

A NORMAL EVENING.

Mouche is a game played with five cards dealt to each player, and one turned over. The turned-over card is trumps. At each round the player is at liberty to run his chances or to abstain from playing his card. If he abstains he loses nothing but his own stake, for as long as there are no forfeits in the basket each player puts in a trifling sum. If he plays and wins a trick he is paid *pro rata* to the stake; that is, if there are five sous in the basket, he wins one sou. The player who fails to win a trick is made *mouche*; he has to pay the whole stake, which swells the basket for the next game. Those who decline to play throw down their cards during the game; but their play is held to be null. The players can exchange their cards with the remainder of the pack, as in *écarté*, but only by order of sequence, so that the first and second holders may, and sometimes do, absorb the remainder of the pack between them. The turned-over trump card belongs to the dealer, who is always the last; he has the right to exchange it for any card in his own hand. One powerful card is of more importance than all the rest; it is called *Mistigris*. *Mistigris* is the knave of clubs.

This game, simple as it is, is not lacking in interest. The cupidity natural to mankind develops in it; so does diplomatic wiliness; also play of countenance. At the hôtel du Guénic, each of the players took twenty counters, representing five sous; which made the sum total of the stake for each game five farthings, a large amount in the eyes of this company. Supposing some extraordinary luck, fifty sous might be won, — more capital than any person in Guérande spent in the course of any one day. Consequently Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël put into this game (the innocence of which is only surpassed in the nomenclature of the Academy by that of *La Bataille*) a passion corresponding to that of the hunters after big game. Mademoiselle Zéphirine, who went shares in the game with the baroness, attached no less importance to it. To put up one farthing for the chance of winning five, game after game, was to this confirmed hoarder a mighty financial operation, into which she put as much mental action as the most eager speculator at the Bourse expends during the rise and fall of consols.

By a certain diplomatic convention, dating from September, 1825, when Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël lost thirty-five sous, the game was to cease as soon as a person losing ten sous should express the wish to retire. Politeness did not allow the rest to give the retiring player the pain of seeing the game go on without him. But, as all passions have their jesuitism, the chevalier and the baron, those wily politicians, had found a means of eluding this charter. When all the players but one were anxious to continue

an exciting game, the daring sailor, du Halga, one of those rich fellows prodigal of costs they do not pay, would offer ten counters to Mademoiselle Zéphirine or Mademoiselle Jacqueline, when either of them, or both of them, had lost their five sous, on condition of reimbursement in case they won. An old bachelor could allow himself such gallantries to the sex. The baron also offered ten counters to the old maids, but under the honest pretext of continuing the game. The miserly maidens accepted, not, however, without some pressing, as is the use and wont of maidens. But, before giving way to this vast prodigality the baron and the chevalier were required to have won; otherwise the offer would have been taken as an insult.

Mouche became a brilliant affair when a Demoiselle de Kergarouët was in transit with her aunt. We use the single name, for the Kergarouëts had never been able to induce any one to call them Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël, — not even their servants, although the latter had strict orders so to do. At these times the aunt held out to the niece as a signal treat the *mouche* at the du Guénics. The girl was ordered to look amiable, an easy thing to do in presence of the beautiful Calyste, whom the four Kergarouët young ladies all adored. Brought up in the midst of modern civilization, these young persons cared little for five sous a game, and on such occasions the stakes went higher. Those were evenings of great emotion to the old blind sister. The baroness would give her sundry hints by pressing her foot a certain number of times, according to the size of the stake it was safe to play. To play or not to play, if the basket were full, involved an inward

struggle, where cupidity fought with fear. If Charlotte de Kergarouët, who was usually called giddy, was lucky in her bold throws, her aunt on their return home (if she had not won herself), would be cold and disapproving, and lecture the girl: she had too much decision in her character; a young person should never assert herself in presence of her betters; her manner of taking the basket and beginning to play was really insolent; the proper behavior of a young girl demanded much more reserve and greater modesty; etc.

It can easily be imagined that these games, carried on nightly for twenty years, were interrupted now and then by narratives of events in the town, or by discussions on public events. Sometimes the players would sit for half an hour, their cards held fan-shape on their stomachs, engaged in talking. If, as a result of these inattentions, a counter was missing from the basket, every one eagerly declared that he or she had put in their proper number. Usually the chevalier made up the deficiency, being accused by the rest of thinking so much of his buzzing ears, his chilly chest, and other symptoms of invalidism that he must have forgotten his stake. But no sooner did he supply the missing counter than Zéphirine and Jacqueline were seized with remorse; they imagined that, possibly, they themselves had forgotten their stake; they believed — they doubted — but, after all, the chevalier was rich enough to bear such a trifling misfortune. These dignified and noble personages had the delightful pettiness of suspecting each other. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël would almost invariably accuse the rector of cheating when he won the basket.

“While the rector was dealing the cards.”



Albert Fourié

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Procédé Goupi

“It is singular,” he would reply, “that I never cheat except when I win the trick.”

Often the baron would forget where he was when the talk fell on the misfortunes of the royal house. Sometimes the evening ended in a manner that was quite unexpected to the players, who all counted on a certain gain. After a certain number of games and when the hour grew late, these excellent people would be forced to separate without either loss or gain, but not without emotion. On these sad evenings complaints were made of *mouche* itself; it was dull, it was long; the players accused their *mouche* as negroes stone the moon in the water when the weather is bad. On one occasion, after an arrival of the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, there was talk of whist and boston being games of more interest than *mouche*. The baroness, who was bored by *mouche*, encouraged the innovation, and all the company — but not without reluctance — adopted it. But it proved impossible to make them really understand the new games, which, on the departure of the Kergarouëts, were voted head-splitters, algebraic problems, and intolerably difficult to play. All preferred their *mouche*, their dear, agreeable *mouche*. *Mouche* accordingly triumphed over modern games, as all ancient things have ever triumphed in Brittany over novelties.

While the rector was dealing the cards the baroness was asking the Chevalier du Halga the same questions which she had asked him the evening before about his health. The chevalier made it a point of honor to have new ailments. Inquiries might be alike, but the nautical hero had singular advantages in the way of

replies. To-day it chanced that his ribs troubled him. But here's a remarkable thing! never did the worthy chevalier complain of his wounds. The ills that were really the matter with him he expected, he knew them and he bore them; but his fancied ailments, his headaches, the gnawings in his stomach, the buzzing in his ears, and a thousand other fads and symptoms made him horribly uneasy; he posed as incurable, — and not without reason, for doctors up to the present time have found no remedy for diseases that don't exist.

“Yesterday the trouble was, I believe, in your legs,” said the rector.

“It moves about,” replied the chevalier.

“Legs to ribs?” asked Mademoiselle Zéphirine.

“Without stopping on the way?” said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, smiling.

The chevalier bowed gravely, making a negative gesture which was not a little droll, and proved to an observer that in his youth the sailor had been witty and loving and beloved. Perhaps his fossil life at Guérande hid many memories. When he stood, solemnly planted on his two heron-legs in the sunshine on the mall, gazing at the sea or watching the gambols of his little dog, perhaps he was living again in some terrestrial paradise of a past that was rich in recollections.

“So the old Duc de Lenoncourt is dead,” said the baron, remembering the paragraph of the “*Quotidienne*,” where his wife had stopped reading. “Well, the first gentleman of the Bedchamber followed his master soon. I shall go next.”

“My dear, my dear!” said his wife, gently tapping the bony calloused hand of her husband.

“Let him say what he likes, sister,” said Zéphirine; “as long as I am above ground he can’t be under it; I am the elder.”

A gay smile played on the old woman’s lips. Whenever the baron made reflections of that kind, the players and the visitors present looked at each other with emotion, distressed by the sadness of the king of Guérande; and after they had left the house they would say, as they walked home: “Monsieur du Guénic was sad to-night. Did you notice how he slept?” And the next day the whole town would talk of the matter. “The Baron du Guénic fails,” was a phrase that opened the conversation in many houses.

“How is Thisbe?” asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël of the chevalier, as soon as the cards were dealt.

“The poor little thing is like her master,” replied the chevalier; “she has some nervous trouble, she goes on three legs constantly. See, like this.”

In raising and crooking his arm to imitate the dog, the chevalier exposed his hand to his cunning neighbor, who wanted to see if he had *Mistigris* or the trump, — a first wile to which he succumbed.

“Oh!” said the baroness, “the end of Monsieur le curé’s nose is turning white; he has *Mistigris*.”

The pleasure of having *Mistigris* was so great to the rector — as it was to the other players — that the poor priest could not conceal it. In all human faces there is a spot where the secret emotions of the heart betray themselves; and these companions, accustomed for years to observe each other, had ended by finding out

that spot on the rector's face: when he had Mistigris the tip of his nose grew pale.

"You had company to-day," said the chevalier to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Yes, a cousin of my brother-in-law. He surprised me by announcing the marriage of the Comtesse de Kergarouët, a Demoiselle de Fontaine."

"The daughter of 'Grand-Jacques,'" cried the chevalier, who had lived with his admiral during his stay in Paris.

"The countess is his heir; she has married an old ambassador. My visitor told me the strangest things about our neighbor, Mademoiselle des Touches, — so strange that I can't believe them. If they were true, Calyste would never be so constantly with her; he has too much good sense not to perceive such monstrosities —"

"Monstrosities?" said the baron, waked up by the word.

The baroness and the rector exchanged looks. The cards were dealt; Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had Mistigris! Impossible to continue the conversation! But she was glad to hide her joy under the excitement caused by her last word.

"Your play, monsieur le baron," she said, with an air of importance.

"My nephew is not one of those youths who like monstrosities," remarked Zéphirine, taking out her knitting-needle and scratching her head.

"Mistigris!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, making no reply to her friend.

The rector, who appeared to be well-informed in the

matter of Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches, did not enter the lists.

“What does she do that is so extraordinary, Mademoiselle des Touches?” asked the baron.

“She smokes,” replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

“That ’s very wholesome,” said the chevalier.

“About her property?” asked the baron.

“Her property?” continued the old maid. “Oh, she is running through it.”

“The game is mine!” said the baroness. “See, I have king, queen, knave of trumps, Mistigris, and a king. We win the basket, sister.”

This victory, gained at one stroke, without playing a card, horrified Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who ceased to concern herself about Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches. By nine o’clock no one remained in the salon but the baroness and the rector. The four old people had gone to their beds. The chevalier, according to his usual custom, accompanied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to her house in the Place de Guérande, making remarks as they went along on the cleverness of the last play, on the pleasures, more or less great, of the evening, on the joy with which Mademoiselle Zéphirine engulfed her gains in those capacious pockets of hers, — for the old blind woman no longer repressed upon her face the visible signs of her feelings. Madame du Guénié’s evident preoccupation was the chief topic of conversation, however. The chevalier had remarked the abstraction of the beautiful Irish woman. When they reached Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël’s door-step, and her page had gone in, the old lady answered, confidentially, the remarks of

the chevalier on the strangely abstracted air of the baroness:—

“I know the cause. Calyste is lost unless we marry him promptly. He loves Mademoiselle des Touches, an actress!”

“In that case, send for Charlotte.”

“I have sent; my sister will receive my letter to-morrow,” replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, bowing to the chevalier.

Imagine from this sketch of a normal evening the hubbub excited in Guérande homes by the arrival, the stay, the departure, or even the mere passage through the town, of a stranger.

When no sounds echoed from the baron’s chamber nor from that of his sister, the baroness looked at the rector, who was playing pensively with the counters.

“I see that you begin to share my anxiety about Calyste,” she said to him.

“Did you notice Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël’s displeased looks to-night?” asked the rector.

“Yes,” replied the baroness.

“She has, as I know, the best intentions about our dear Calyste; she loves him as though he were her son; his conduct in Vendée beside his father, the praises that MADAME bestowed upon his devotion, have only increased her affection for him. She intends to execute a deed of gift by which she gives her whole property at her death to whichever of her nieces Calyste marries. I know that you have another and much richer marriage in Ireland for your dear Calyste; but it is well to have two strings to your bow. In case your family will not take charge of Calyste’s

establishment, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's fortune is not to be despised. You can always find a match of seven thousand a year for the dear boy, but it is not often that you could come across the savings of forty years and landed property as well managed, built up, and kept in repair as that of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. That ungodly woman, Mademoiselle des Touches, has come here to ruin many excellent things. Her life is now known."

"And what is it?" asked the mother.

"Oh! that of a trollop," replied the rector, — "a woman of questionable morals; a writer for the stage; frequenting theatres and actors; squandering her fortune among pamphleteers, painters, musicians, a devilish society, in short. She writes books herself, and has taken a false name by which she is better known, they tell me, than by her own. She seems to be a sort of circus woman who never enters a church except to look at the pictures. She has spent quite a fortune in decorating Les Touches in a most improper fashion, making it a Mohammedan paradise where the houris are not women. There is more wine drunk there, they say, during the few weeks of her stay than the whole year round in Guéraude. The Demoiselles Bougniol let their lodgings last year to men with beards, who were suspected of being Blues; they sang wicked songs which made those virtuous women blush and weep, and spent their time mostly at Les Touches. And this is the woman our dear Calyste adores! If that creature wanted to-night one of the infamous books in which the atheists of the present day seoff at holy things, Calyste would saddle his horse him-

self and gallop to Nantes for it. I am not sure that he would do as much for the Church. Moreover, this Breton woman is not a royalist! If Calyste were again called upon to strike a blow for the cause, and Mademoiselle des Touches — the *Sieur Camille Maupin*, that is her other name, as I have just remembered — if she wanted to keep him with her the chevalier would let his old father go to the field without him.”

“Oh, no!” said the baroness.

“I should not like to put him to the proof; you would suffer too much,” replied the rector. “All Guérande is turned upside down about Calyste’s passion for this amphibious creature, who is neither man nor woman, who smokes like an hussar, writes like a journalist, and has at this very moment in her house the most venomous of all writers, — so the postmaster says, and he’s a *juste-milieu* man who reads the papers. They are even talking about her at Nantes. This morning the Kergarouët cousin, who wants to marry Charlotte to a man with sixty thousand francs a year, went to see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, and filled her mind with tales about Mademoiselle des Touches which lasted seven hours. It is now striking a quarter to ten, and Calyste not home; he is at Les Touches, — perhaps he won’t come in all night.”

The baroness listened to the rector, who was substituting monologue for dialogue unconsciously as he looked at this lamb of his fold, on whose face could be read her anxiety. She colored and trembled. When the worthy man saw the tears in the beautiful eyes of the terrified mother, he was moved to compassion.

“I will see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel to-morrow,” he said. “Don’t be too uneasy. The harm may not be as great as they say it is. I will find out the truth. Mademoiselle Jacqueline has confidence in me. Besides, Calyste is our child, our pupil, — he will never let the devil inveigle him; neither will he trouble the peace of his family or destroy the plans we have made for his future. Therefore, don’t weep; all is not lost, madame; one fault is not vice.”

“You are only informing me of details,” said the baroness. “Was not I the first to notice the change in my Calyste? A mother keenly feels the shock of finding herself second in the heart of her son. She cannot be deceived. This crisis in a man’s life is one of the trials of motherhood. I have prepared myself for it, but I did not think it would come so soon. I hoped, at least, that Calyste would take into his heart some noble and beautiful being, — not a stage-player, a masquerader, a theatre woman, an author whose business it is to feign sentiments, a creature who will deceive him and make him unhappy! She has had adventures — ”

“With several men,” said the rector. “And yet this impious creature was born in Brittany! She dishonors her land. I shall preach a sermon upon her next Sunday.”

“Don’t do that!” cried the baroness. “The peasants and the *paludiers* would be capable of rushing to Les Touches. Calyste is worthy of his name; he is Breton; some dreadful thing might happen to him, for he would surely defend her as he would the Blessed Virgin.”

“It is now ten o’clock; I must bid you good-night,” said the abbé, lighting the wick of his lantern, the glass of which was clear and the metal shining, which testified to the care his housekeeper bestowed on the household property. “Who could ever have told me, madame,” he added, “that a young man brought up by you, trained by me to Christian ideas, a fervent Catholic, a child who has lived as a lamb without spot, would plunge into such mire?”

“But is it certain?” said the mother. “How could any woman help loving Calyste?”

“What other proof is needed than her staying on at Les Touches. In all the twenty-four years since she came of age she has never stayed there so long as now; her visits to these parts, happily for us, were few and short.”

“A woman over forty years old!” exclaimed the baroness. “I have heard say in Ireland that a woman of this description is the most dangerous mistress a young man can have.”

“As to that, I have no knowledge,” replied the rector, “and I shall die in my ignorance.”

“And I, too, alas!” said the baroness, naïvely. “I wish now that I had loved with love, so as to understand and counsel and comfort Calyste.”

The rector did not cross the clean little court-yard alone; the baroness accompanied him to the gate, hoping to hear Calyste’s step coming through the town. But she heard nothing except the heavy tread of the rector’s cautious feet, which grew fainter in the distance, and finally ceased when the closing of the door of the parsonage echoed behind him.

V.

CALYSTE.

THE poor mother returned to the salon deeply distressed at finding that the whole town was aware of what she thought was known to her alone. She sat down, trimmed the wick of the lamp by cutting it with a pair of old scissors, took up once more the worsted-work she was doing, and awaited Calyste. The baroness fondly hoped to induce her son by this means to come home earlier and spend less time with *Mademoiselle des Touches*. Such calculations of maternal jealousy were wasted. Day after day, Calyste's visits to *Les Touches* became more frequent, and every night he came in later. The night before the day of which we speak it was midnight when he returned.

The baroness, lost in maternal meditation, was setting her stitches with the rapidity of one absorbed in thought while engaged in manual labor. Whoever had seen her bending to the light of the lamp beneath the quadruply centennial hangings of that ancient room would have admired the sublimity of the picture. Fanny's skin was so transparent that it was possible to read the thoughts that crossed her brow beneath it. Piqued with a curiosity that often comes to a pure woman, she asked herself what devilish

secrets these daughters of Baal possessed to so charm men as to make them forgetful of mother, family, country, and self-interests. Sometimes she longed to meet this woman and judge her soberly for herself. Her mind measured to its full extent the evils which the innovating spirit of the age — described to her as so dangerous for young souls by the rector — would have upon her only child, until then so guileless; as pure as an innocent girl, and beautiful with the same fresh beauty.

Calyste, that splendid offspring of the oldest Breton race and the noblest Irish blood, had been nurtured by his mother with the utmost care. Until the moment when the baroness made over the training of him to the rector of Guérande; she was certain that no impure word, no evil thought had sullied the ears or entered the mind of her precious son. After nursing him at her bosom, giving him her own life twice, as it were, after guiding his footsteps as a little child, the mother had put him with all his virgin innocence into the hands of the pastor, who, out of true reverence for the family, had promised to give him a thorough and Christian education. Calyste thenceforth received the instruction which the abbé himself had received at the Seminary. The baroness taught him English, and a teacher of mathematics was found, not without difficulty, among the employés at Saint-Nazaire. Calyste was therefore necessarily ignorant of modern literature, and the advance and present progress of the sciences. His education had been limited to geography and the circumspect history of a young ladies' boarding-school, the Latin and Greek of seminaries,

the literature of the dead languages, and to a very restricted choice of French writers. When, at sixteen, he began what the Abbé Grimont called his philosophy, he was neither more nor less than what he was when Fanny placed him in the abbé's hands. The Church had proved as maternal as the mother. Without being over-pious or ridiculous, the idolized young lad was a fervent Catholic.

For this son, so noble, so innocent, the baroness desired to provide a happy life in obscurity. She expected to inherit some property, two or three thousand pounds sterling, from an aunt. This sum, joined to the small present fortune of the Guénics, might enable her to find a wife for Calyste, who would bring him twelve or even fifteen thousand francs a year. Charlotte de Kergarouët, with her aunt's fortune, a rich Irish girl, or any other good heiress would have suited the baroness, who seemed indifferent as to choice. She was ignorant of love, having never known it, and, like all the other persons grouped about her, she saw nothing in marriage but a means of fortune. Passion was an unknown thing to these Catholic souls, these old people exclusively concerned about salvation, God, the king, and their property. No one should be surprised, therefore, at the foreboding thoughts which accompanied the wounded feelings of the mother, who lived as much for the future interests of her son as by her love for him. If the young household would only listen to wisdom, she thought, the coming generation of the du Guénics, by enduring privations, and saving, as people do save in the provinces, would be able to buy back their estates

and recover, in the end, the lustre of wealth. The baroness prayed for a long old age that she might see the dawn of this prosperous era. Mademoiselle du Guénic had understood and fully adopted this hope which Mademoiselle des Touches now threatened to overthrow.

The baroness heard midnight strike, with tears; her mind conceived of many horrors during the next hour, for the clock struck one, and Calyste was still not at home.

“Will he stay there?” she thought. “It would be the first time. Poor child!”

At that moment Calyste’s step resounded in the lane. The poor mother, in whose heart rejoicing drove out anxiety, flew from the house to the gate and opened it for her boy.

“Oh!” cried Calyste, in a grieved voice, “my darling mother, why did you sit up for me? I have a pass-key and the tinder-box.”

“You know very well, my child, that I cannot sleep when you are out,” she said, kissing him.

When the baroness reached the salon, she looked at her son to discover, if possible, from the expression of his face the events of the evening. But he caused her, as usual, an emotion that frequency never weakened, — an emotion which all loving mothers feel at sight of a human masterpiece made by them; this sentiment blurs their sight and supersedes all others for the moment.

Except for the black eyes, full of energy and the heat of the sun, which he derived from his father, Calyste in other respects resembled his mother; he

had her beautiful golden hair, her lovable mouth, the same curving fingers, the same soft, delicate, and purely white skin. Though slightly resembling a girl disguised as a man, his physical strength was herculean. His muscles had the suppleness and vigor of steel springs, and the singularity of his black eyes and fair complexion was by no means without charm. His beard had not yet sprouted; this delay, it is said, is a promise of longevity. The chevalier was dressed in a short coat of black velvet like that of his mother's gown, trimmed with silver buttons, a blue foulard necktie, trousers of gray jean, and a becoming pair of gaiters. His white brow bore the signs of great fatigue, caused, to an observer's eye, by the weight of painful thoughts; but his mother, incapable of supposing that troubles could wring his heart, attributed his evident weariness to passing excitement. Calyste was as handsome as a Greek god, and handsome without conceit; in the first place, he had his mother's beauty constantly before him, and next, he cared very little for personal advantages which he found useless.

"Those beautiful pure cheeks," thought his mother, "where the rich young blood is flowing, belong to another woman! she is the mistress of that innocent brow! Ah! passion will lead to many evils; it will tarnish the look of those eyes, moist as the eyes of an infant!"

This bitter thought wrung Fanny's heart and destroyed her pleasure.

It may seem strange to those who calculate expenses that in a family of six persons compelled to live on

three thousand francs a year the son should have a coat and the mother a gown of velvet; but Fanny O'Brien had aunts and rich relations in London who recalled themselves to her remembrance by many presents. Several of her sisters, married to great wealth, took enough interest in Calyste to wish to find him an heiress, knowing that he, like Fanny their exiled favorite, was noble and handsome.

"You stayed at Les Touches later than you did last night, my dear one," said the mother at last, in an agitated tone.

"Yes, dear mother," he answered, offering no explanation.

The curtness of this answer brought clouds to his mother's brow, and she resolved to postpone the explanation till the morrow. When mothers admit the anxieties which were now torturing the baroness, they tremble before their sons; they feel instinctively the effect of the great emancipation that comes with love; they perceive what that sentiment is about to take from them; but they have, at the same time, a sense of joy in knowing that their sons are happy; conflicting feelings battle in their hearts. Though the result may be the development of their sons into superior men, true mothers do not like this forced abdication; they would rather keep their children small and still requiring protection. Perhaps that is the secret of their predilection for feeble, deformed, or weak-minded offspring.

"You are tired, dear child; go to bed," she said, repressing her tears.

A mother who does not know all that her son is

doing thinks the worst; that is, if a mother loves as much and is as much beloved as Fanny. But perhaps all other mothers would have trembled now as she did. The patient care of twenty years might be rendered worthless. This human masterpiece of virtuous and noble and religious education, Calyste, might be destroyed; the happiness of his life, so long and carefully prepared for, might be forever ruined by this woman.

The next day Calyste slept till mid-day, for his mother would not have him wakened. Mariotte served the spoiled child's breakfast in his bed. The inflexible and semi-conventual rules which regulated the hours for meals yielded to the caprices of the cavalier. If it became desirable to extract from Mademoiselle du Guénic her array of keys in order to obtain some necessary article of food outside of the meal hours, there was no other means of doing it than to make the pretext of its serving some fancy of Calyste.

About one o'clock the baron, his wife, and Mademoiselle were seated in the salon, for they dined at three o'clock. The baroness was again reading the "Quotidienne" to her husband, who was always more awake before the dinner hour. As she finished a paragraph she heard the steps of her son on the upper floor, and she dropped the paper, saying:—

"Calyste must be going to dine again at Les Touches; he has dressed himself."

"He amuses himself, the dear boy," said the old sister, taking a silver whistle from her pocket and whistling once.

Mariotte came through the tower and appeared at the door of communication which was hidden by a silken curtain like the other doors of the room.

“What is it?” she said; “anything wanted?”

“The chevalier dines at Les Touches; don’t cook the fish.”

“But we are not sure as yet,” said the baroness.

“You seem annoyed, sister; I know it by the tone of your voice.”

“Monsieur Grimont has heard some very grave charges against Mademoiselle des Touches, who for the last year has so changed our dear Calyste.”

“Changed him, how?” asked the baron.

“He reads all sorts of books.”

“Ah! ah!” exclaimed the baron, “so that’s why he has given up hunting and riding.”

“Her morals are very reprehensible, and she has taken a man’s name,” added Madame du Guénic.

“A war name, I suppose,” said the old man. “I was called ‘l’Intime,’ the Comte de Fontaine ‘Grand-Jacques,’ the Marquis de Montauran the ‘Gars.’ I was the friend of Ferdinand, who never submitted, any more than I did. Ah! those were the good times; people shot each other, but what of that? we amused ourselves all the same, here and there.”

This war memory, pushing aside paternal anxiety, saddened Fanny for a moment. The rector’s revelations, the want of confidence shown to her by Calyste, had kept her from sleeping.

“Suppose Monsieur le chevalier does love Mademoiselle des Touches, where’s the harm?” said Mariotte. “She has thirty thousand francs a year and she is very handsome.”

“What is that you say, Mariotte?” exclaimed the old baron. “A Guénié marry a des Touches! The des Touches were not even grooms in the days when du Guesclin considered our alliance a signal honor.”

“A woman who takes a man’s name, — Camille Maupin!” said the baroness.

“The Maupins are an old family,” said the baron; “they bear: gules, three —” He stopped. “But she cannot be a Maupin and a des Touches both,” he added.

“She is called Maupin on the stage.”

“A des Touches could hardly be an actress,” said the old man. “Really, Fanny, if I did not know you, I should think you were out of your head.”

“She writes plays, and books,” continued the baroness.

“Books?” said the baron, looking at his wife with an air of as much surprise as though she were telling of a miracle. “I have heard that Mademoiselle Scudéry and Madame de Sévigné wrote books, but it was not the best thing they did.”

“Are you going to dine at Les Touches, monsieur?” said Mariotte, when Calyste entered.

“Probably,” replied the young man.

Mariotte was not inquisitive; she was part of the family; and she left the room without waiting to hear what the baroness would say to her son.

“Are you going again to Les Touches, my Calyste?” The baroness emphasized the *my*. “Les Touches is not a respectable or decent house. Its mistress leads an irregular life; she will corrupt our Calyste. Already Camille Maupin has made him read many

books; she has had adventures — You knew all that, my naughty child, and you never said one word to your best friends!”

“The chevalier is discreet,” said his father, — “a virtue of the olden time.”

“Too discreet,” said the jealous mother, observing the red flush on her son’s forehead.

“My dear mother,” said Calyste, kneeling down beside the baroness, “I did n’t think it necessary to publish my defeat. Mademoiselle des Touches, or, if you choose to call her so, Camille Maupin, rejected my love more than eighteen months ago, during her last stay at Les Touches. She laughed at me, gently; saying she might very well be my mother; that a woman of forty committed a sort of crime against nature in loving a minor, and that she herself was incapable of such depravity. She made a thousand little jokes, which hurt me — for she is witty as an angel; but when she saw me weep hot tears she tried to comfort me, and offered me her friendship in the noblest manner. She has more heart than even talent; she is as generous as you are yourself. I am now her child. On her return here lately, hearing from her that she loves another, I have resigned myself. Do not repeat the calumnies that have been said of her. Camille is an artist, she has genius, she leads one of those exceptional existences which cannot be judged like ordinary lives.”

“My child,” said the religious Fanny, “nothing can excuse a woman for not conducting herself as the Church requires. She fails in her duty to God and to society by abjuring the gentle tenets of her sex.

A woman commits a sin in even going to a theatre; but to write the impieties that actors repeat, to roam about the world, first with an enemy to the Pope, and then with a musician, ah! Calyste, you can never persuade me that such actions are deeds of faith, hope, or charity. Her fortune was given her by God to do good, and what good does she do with hers?"

Calyste sprang up suddenly and looked at his mother.

"Mother," he said, "Camille is my friend; I cannot hear her spoken of in this way; I would give my very life for her."

"Your life!" said the baroness, looking at her son, with startled eyes. "Your life is our life, the life of all of us."

"My nephew has just said many things I do not understand," said the old blind woman, turning toward him.

"Where did he learn them?" said the mother; "at Les Touches?"

"Yes, my darling mother; she found me ignorant as a carp, and she has taught me."

"You knew the essential things when you learned the duties taught us by religion," replied the baroness. "Ah! this woman is fated to destroy your noble and sacred beliefs."

The old maid rose, and solemnly stretched forth her hands toward her brother, who was dozing in his chair.

"Calyste," she said, in a voice that came from her heart, "your father has never opened books, he speaks Breton, he fought for God and for the king. Educated

people did the evil, educated noblemen deserted their land, — be educated if you choose!”

So saying, she sat down and began to knit with a rapidity which betrayed her inward emotion.

“My angel,” said the mother, weeping, “I foresee some evil coming down upon you in that house.”

“Who is making Fanny weep?” cried the old man, waking with a start at the sound of his wife’s voice. He looked round upon his sister, his son, and the baroness. “What is the matter?” he asked.

“Nothing, my friend,” replied his wife.

“Mamma,” said Calyste, whispering in his mother’s ear, “it is impossible for me to explain myself just now; but to-night you and I will talk of this. When you know all, you will bless *Mademoiselle des Touches*.”

“Mothers do not like to curse,” replied the baroness. “I could not curse a woman who truly loved my Calyste.”

The young man bade adieu to his father and went out. The baron and his wife rose to see him pass through the court-yard, open the gate, and disappear. The baroness did not again take up the newspaper; she was too agitated. In this tranquil, untroubled life such a discussion was the equivalent of a quarrel in other homes. Though somewhat calmed, her motherly uneasiness was not dispersed. Whither would such a friendship, which might claim the life of Calyste and destroy it, lead her boy? Bless *Mademoiselle des Touches*? how could that be? These questions were as momentous to her simple soul as the fury of revolutions to a statesman. Camille

Maupin was Revolution itself in that calm and placid home.

“I fear that woman will ruin him,” she said, picking up the paper.

“My dear Fanny,” said the old baron, with a jaunty air, “you are too much of an angel to understand these things. Mademoiselle des Touches is, they say, as black as a crow, as strong as a Turk, and forty years old. Our dear Calyste was certain to fall in love with her. Of course he will tell certain honorable little lies to conceal his happiness. Let him alone to amuse himself with his first illusions.”

“If it had been any other woman —” began the baroness.

“But, my dear Fanny, if the woman were a saint she would not accept your son.” The baroness again picked up the paper. “I will go and see her myself,” added the baron, “and tell you all about her.”

This speech has no savor at the present moment. But after reading the biography of Camille Maupin you can then imagine the old baron entering the lists against that illustrious woman.

VI.

BIOGRAPHY OF CAMILLE MAUPIN.

THE TOWN of Guérande, which for two months past had seen Calyste, its flower and pride, going, morning or evening, often morning and evening, to Les Touches, concluded that Mademoiselle Félicité des Touches was passionately in love with the beautiful youth, and that she practised upon him all kinds of sorceries. More than one young girl and young wife asked herself by what right an old woman exercised so absolute an empire over that angel. When Calyste passed along the Grand' Rue to the Croisic gate many a regretful eye was fastened on him.

It now becomes necessary to explain the rumors which hovered about the person whom Calyste was on his way to see. These rumors, swelled by Breton gossip, envenomed by public ignorance, had reached the rector. The receiver of taxes, the *juge de paix*, the head of the Saint-Nazaire custom-house and other lettered persons had not reassured the abbé by relating to him the strange and fantastic life of the female writer who concealed herself under the masculine name of Camille Maupin. She did not as yet eat little children, nor kill her slaves like Cleopatra, nor throw men into the river as the heroine of the Tour de Nesle was falsely accused of doing; but to the Abbé Grimont

this monstrous creature, a cross between a siren and an atheist, was an immoral combination of woman and philosopher who violated every social law invented to restrain or utilize the infirmities of woman-kind.

Just as Clara Gazul is the female pseudonym of a distinguished male writer, George Sand the masculine pseudonym of a woman of genius, so Camille Maupin was the mask behind which was long hidden a charming young woman, very well-born, a Breton, named Félicité des Touches, the person who was now causing such lively anxiety to the Baronne du Guénié and the excellent rector of Guérande. The Breton des Touches family has no connection with the family of the same name in Touraine, to which belongs the ambassador of the Regent, even more famous to-day for his writings than for his diplomatic talents.

Camille Maupin, one of the few celebrated women of the nineteenth century, was long supposed to be a man, on account of the virility of her first writings. All the world now knows the two volumes of plays, not intended for representation on the stage, written after the manner of Shakespeare or Lopez de Vega, published in 1822, which made a sort of literary revolution when the great question of the classics and the romanticists palpitated on all sides, — in the newspapers, at the clubs, at the Academy, everywhere. Since then, Camille Maupin has written several plays and a novel, which have not belied the success obtained by her first publication — now, perhaps, too much forgotten. To explain by what net-work of circumstances the masculine incarnation of a young girl

was brought about, why Félicité des Touches became a man and an author, and why, more fortunate than Madame de Staël, she kept her freedom and was thus more excusable for her celebrity, would be to satisfy many curiosities and do justice to one of those abnormal beings who rise in humanity like monuments, and whose fame is promoted by its rarity, — for in twenty centuries we can count, at most, twenty famous women. Therefore, although in these pages she stands as a secondary character, in consideration of the fact that she plays a great part in the literary history of our epoch, and that her influence over Calyste was great, no one, we think, will regret being made to pause before that figure rather longer than modern art permits.

Mademoiselle Félicité des Touches became an orphan in 1793. Her property escaped confiscation by reason of the deaths of her father and brother. The first was killed on the 10th of August, at the threshold of the palace, among the defenders of the king, near whose person his rank as major of the guards of the gate had placed him. Her brother, one of the body-guard, was massacred at Les Carmes. Mademoiselle des Touches was two years old when her mother died, killed by grief, a few days after this second catastrophe. When dying, Madame des Touches confided her daughter to her sister, a nun of Chelles. Madame de Faucombe, the nun, prudently took the orphan to Faucombe, a good-sized estate near Nantes, belonging to Madame des Touches, and there she settled with the little girl and three sisters of her convent. The populace of Nantes, during the last days of the Terror, tore down the château, seized the nuns and

Mademoiselle des Touches, and threw them into prison on a false charge of receiving emissaries of Pitt and Coburg. The 9th Thermidor released them. Félicité's aunt died of fear. Two of the sisters left France, and the third confided the little girl to her nearest relation, Monsieur de Faucombe, her maternal great-uncle, who lived in Nantes.

Monsieur de Faucombe, an old man sixty years of age, had married a young woman to whom he left the management of his affairs. He busied himself in archæology, — a passion, or to speak more correctly, one of those manias which enable old men to fancy themselves still living. The education of his ward was therefore left to chance. Little cared-for by her uncle's wife, a young woman given over to the social pleasures of the imperial epoch, Félicité brought herself up as a boy. She kept company with Monsieur de Faucombe in his library; where she read everything it pleased her to read. She thus obtained a knowledge of life in theory, and had no innocence of mind, though virgin personally. Her intellect floated on the impurities of knowledge while her heart was pure. Her learning became extraordinary, the result of a passion for reading, sustained by a powerful memory. At eighteen years of age she was as well-informed on all topics as a young man entering a literary career has need to be in our day. Her prodigious reading controlled her passions far more than conventual life would have done; for there the imaginations of young girls run riot. A brain crammed with knowledge that was neither digested nor classed governed the heart and soul of the child. This depravity of the intellect,

without action upon the chastity of the body, would have amazed philosophers and observers, had any one in Nantes even suspected the powers of Mademoiselle des Touches.

The result of all this was in a contrary direction to the cause. Félicité had no inclinations toward evil; she conceived everything by thought, but abstained from deed. Old Faucombe was enchanted with her, and she helped him in his work, — writing three of his books, which the worthy old gentleman believed were his own; for his spiritual paternity was blind. Such mental labor, not agreeing with the developments of girlhood, had its effect. Félicité fell ill; her blood was overheated, and her chest seemed threatened with inflammation. The doctors ordered horseback exercise and the amusements of society. Mademoiselle des Touches became, in consequence, an admirable horsewoman, and recovered her health in a few months.

At the age of eighteen she appeared in the world, where she produced so great a sensation that no one in Nantes called her anything else than “the beautiful Mademoiselle des Touches.” Led to enter society by one of the imperishable sentiments in the heart of a woman, however superior she may be, the worship she inspired found her cold and unresponsive. Hurt by her aunt and her cousins, who ridiculed her studies and teased her about her unwillingness for society, which they attributed to a lack of the power of pleasing, Félicité resolved on making herself coquettish, gay, volatile, — a woman, in short. But she expected in return an exchange of ideas, seductions, and pleas-

ures in harmony with the elevation of her own mind and the extent of its knowledge. Instead of that, she was filled with disgust for the commonplaces of conversation, the silliness of gallantry; and more especially was she shocked by the supremacy of military men, to whom society made obeisance at that period. She had, not unnaturally, neglected the minor accomplishments. Finding herself inferior to the pretty dolls who played on the piano and made themselves agreeable by singing ballads, she determined to be a musician. Retiring into her former solitude she set to work resolutely, under the direction of the best master in the town. She was rich, and she sent for Steibelt when the time came to perfect herself. The astonished town still talks of this princely conduct. The stay of that master cost her twelve thousand francs. Later, when she went to Paris, she studied harmony and thorough-bass, and composed the music of two operas which have had great success, though the public has never been admitted to the secret of their authorship. Ostensibly these operas are by Conti, one of the most eminent musicians of our day; but this circumstance belongs to the history of her heart, and will be mentioned later on.

The mediocrity of the society of a provincial town wearied her so excessively, her imagination was so filled with grandiose ideas that although she returned to the salons to eclipse other women once more by her beauty, and enjoy her new triumph as a musician, she again deserted them; and having proved her power to her cousins, and driven two lovers to despair, she returned to her books, her piano, the works of Beethoven,

and her old friend Faucombe. In 1812, when she was twenty-one years of age, the old archæologist handed over to her his guardianship accounts. From that year, she took control of her fortune, which consisted of fifteen thousand francs a year, derived from Les Touches, the property of her father; twelve thousand a year from Faucombe (which, however, she increased one-third on renewing the leases); and a capital of three hundred thousand francs laid by during her minority by her guardian.

Félicité acquired from her experience of provincial life, an understanding of money, and that strong tendency to administrative wisdom which enables the provinces to hold their own under the ascensional movement of capital toward Paris. She drew her three hundred thousand francs from the house of business where her guardian had placed them, and invested them on the Grand-livre at the very moment of the disasters of the retreat from Moscow. In this way, she increased her income by thirty thousand francs. All expenses paid, she found herself with fifty thousand francs a year to invest. At twenty-one years of age a girl with such force of will is the equal of a man of thirty. Her mind had taken a wide range; habits of criticism enabled her to judge soberly of men, and art, and things, and public questions. Henceforth she resolved to leave Nantes; but old Faucombe falling ill with his last illness, she, who had been both wife and daughter to him, remained to nurse him, with the devotion of an angel, for eighteen months, closing his eyes at the moment when Napoleon was struggling with all Europe on the corpse of

France. Her removal to Paris was therefore still further postponed until the close of that crisis.

As a Royalist, she hastened to be present at the return of the Bourbons to Paris. There the Grandlieus, to whom she was related, received her as their guest; but the catastrophes of March 20 intervened, and her future was vague and uncertain. She was thus enabled to see with her own eyes that last image of the Empire, and behold the Grand Army when it came to the Champ de Mars, as to a Roman circus, to salute its Cæsar before it went to its death at Waterloo. The great and noble soul of Félicité was stirred by that magic spectacle. The political commotions, the glamour of that theatrical play of three months which history has called the Hundred Days, occupied her mind and preserved her from all personal emotions in the midst of a convulsion which dispersed the royalist society among whom she had intended to reside. The Grandlieus followed the Bourbons to Ghent, leaving their house to Mademoiselle des Touches. Félicité, who did not choose to take a subordinate position, purchased for one hundred and thirty thousand francs one of the finest houses in the rue Mont Blanc, where she installed herself on the return of the Bourbons in 1815. The garden of this house is to-day worth two millions.

Accustomed to control her own life, Félicité soon familiarized herself with ways of thought and action which are held to be exclusively the province of man. In 1816 she was twenty-five years old. She knew nothing of marriage; her conception of it was wholly that of thought; she judged it in its causes instead of

its effects, and saw only its objectionable side. Her superior mind refused to make the abdication by which a married woman begins that life; she keenly felt the value of independence, and was conscious of disgust for the duties of maternity.

It is necessary to give these details to explain the anomalies presented by the life of Camille Maupin. She had known neither father nor mother; she had been her own mistress from childhood; her guardian was an old archæologist. Chance had flung her into the regions of knowledge and of imagination, into the world of literature, instead of holding her within the rigid circle defined by the futile education given to women, and by maternal instructions as to dress, hypocritical propriety, and the hunting graces of their sex. Thus, long before she became celebrated, a glance might have told an observer that she had never played with dolls.

Toward the close of the year 1817 Félicité des Touches began to perceive, not the fading of her beauty, but the beginning of a certain lassitude of body. She saw that a change would presently take place in her person as the result of her obstinate celibacy. She wanted to retain her youth and beauty, to which at that time she clung. Science warned her of the sentence pronounced by Nature upon all her creations, which perish as much by the misconception of her laws as by the abuse of them. The macerated face of her aunt returned to her memory and made her shudder. Placed between marriage and love, her desire was to keep her freedom; but she was now no longer indifferent to homage and the admiration that

surrounded her. She was, at the moment when this history begins, almost exactly what she was in 1817. Eighteen years had passed over her head and respected it. At forty she might have thought no more than twenty-five.

Therefore to describe her in 1836 is to picture her as she was in 1817. Women who know the conditions of temperament and happiness in which a woman should live to resist the ravages of time will understand how and why *Félicité des Touches* enjoyed this great privilege as they study a portrait for which were reserved the brightest tints of Nature's palette, and the richest setting.

Brittany presents a curious problem to be solved in the predominance of dark hair, brown eyes, and swarthy complexions in a region so near England that the atmospheric effects are almost identical. Does this problem belong to the great question of races? to hitherto unobserved physical influences? Science may some day find the reason of this peculiarity, which ceases in the adjoining province of Normandy. Waiting its solution, this odd fact is there before our eyes; fair complexions are rare in Brittany, where the women's eyes are as black and lively as those of Southern women; but instead of possessing the tall figures and swaying lines of Italy and Spain, they are usually short, close-knit, well set-up and firm, except in the higher classes which are crossed by their alliances.

Mademoiselle des Touches, a true Breton, is of medium height, though she looks taller than she really is. This effect is produced by the character of her

face, which gives height to her form. She has that skin, olive by day and dazzling by candlelight, which distinguishes a beautiful Italian; you might, if you pleased, call it animated ivory. The light glides along a skin of that texture as on a polished surface; it shines; a violent emotion is necessary to bring the faintest color to the centre of the cheeks, where it dies away almost immediately. This peculiarity gives to her face the calm impassibility of the savage. The face, more long than oval, resembles that of some beautiful Isis in the Egyptian bas-reliefs; it has the purity of the heads of sphinxes, polished by the fire of the desert, kissed by a Coptic sun. The tones of the skin are in harmony with the faultless modelling of the head. The black and abundant hair descends in heavy masses beside the throat, like the coil of the statues at Memphis, and carries out magnificently the general severity of form. The forehead is full, broad, and swelling about the temples, illuminated by surfaces which catch the light, and modelled like the brow of the hunting Diana, a powerful and determined brow, silent and self-contained. The arch of the eyebrows, vigorously drawn, surmounts a pair of eyes whose flame scintillates at times like that of a fixed star. The white of the eye is neither bluish, nor strewn with scarlet threads, nor is it purely white; it has the texture of horn, but the tone is warm. The pupil is surrounded by an orange circle; it is of bronze set in gold, but vivid gold and animated bronze. This pupil has depth; it is not underlaid, as in certain eyes, by a species of foil, which sends back the light and makes such eyes resemble those of

cats or tigers; it has not that terrible inflexibility which makes a sensitive person shudder; but this depth has in it something of the infinite, just as the external radiance of the eyes suggests the absolute. The glance of an observer may be lost in that soul, which gathers itself up and retires with as much rapidity as it gushed for a second into those velvet eyes. In moments of passion the eyes of Camille Maupin are sublime; the gold of her glance illuminates them and they flame. But in repose they are dull; the torpor of meditation often lends them an appearance of stupidity;¹ in like manner, when the glow of the soul is absent the lines of the face are sad.

The lashes of the eyelids are short, but thick and black as the tip of an ermine's tail; the eyelids are brown and strewn with red fibrils, which give them grace and strength, — two qualities which are seldom united in a woman. The circle round the eyes shows not the slightest blemish nor the smallest wrinkle. There, again, we find the granite of an Egyptian statue softened by the ages. But the line of the cheek-bones, though soft, is more pronounced than in other women and completes the character of strength which the face expresses. The nose, thin and straight, parts into two oblique nostrils, passionately dilated at times, and showing the transparent pink of their delicate lining. This nose is an admirable continuation of the forehead, with which it blends in a most deli-

¹ George Sand says of herself, in "L'Histoire de Ma Vie," published long after the above was written: "The habit of meditation gave me *l'air bête* (a stupid air). I say the word frankly, for all my life I have been told this, and therefore it must be true." — TR.

scious line. It is perfectly white from its spring to its tip, and the tip is endowed with a sort of mobility which does marvels if Camille is indignant, or angry, or rebellious. There, above all, as Talma once remarked, is seen depicted the anger or the irony of great minds. The immobility of the human nostril indicates a certain barrenness of soul; never did the nose of a miser oscillate; it contracts like the lips; he locks up his face as he does his money.

Camille's mouth, arching at the corners, is of a vivid red; blood abounds there, and supplies the living, thinking oxide which gives such seduction to the lips, reassuring the lover whom the gravity of that majestic face may have dismayed. The upper lip is thin, the furrow which unites it with the nose comes low, giving it a centre curve which emphasizes its natural disdain. Camille has little to do to express anger. This beautiful lip is supported by the strong red breadth of its lower mate, adorable in kindness, swelling with love, a lip like the outer petal of a pomegranate such as Phidias might have carved, and the color of which it has. The chin is firm and rather full; but it expresses resolution and fitly ends this profile, royal if not divine. It is necessary to add that the upper lip beneath the nose is lightly shaded by a charming down. Nature would have made a blunder had she not cast that tender mist upon the face. The ears are delicately convoluted, — a sign of secret refinement. The bust is large, the waist slim and sufficiently rounded. The hips are not prominent, but very graceful; the line of the thighs is magnificent, recalling Bacchus rather than the Venus

Callipyge. There we may see the shadowy line of demarcation which separates nearly every woman of genius from her sex; there such women are found to have a certain vague similitude to man; they have neither the suppleness nor the soft abandonment of those whom Nature destines for maternity; their gait is not broken by faltering motions. This observation may be called bi-lateral; it has its counterpart in men, whose thighs are those of women when they are sly, cunning, false, and cowardly. Camille's neck, instead of curving inward at the nape, curves out in a line that unites the head to the shoulders without sinuosity, a most signal characteristic of force. The neck itself presents at certain moments an athletic magnificence. The spring of the arms from the shoulders, superb in outline, seems to belong to a colossal woman. The arms are vigorously modelled, ending in wrists of English delicacy and charming hands, plump, dimpled, and adorned with rosy, almond-shaped nails; these hands are of a whiteness which reveals that the body, so round, so firm, so well set-up, is of another complexion altogether than the face. The firm, cold carriage of the head is corrected by the mobility of the lips, their changing expression, and the artistic play of the nostrils.

And yet, in spite of all these promises — hidden, perhaps, from the profane — the calm of that countenance has something, I know not what, that is vexatious. More sad, more serious than gracious, that face is marked by the melancholy of constant meditation. For this reason Mademoiselle des Touches listens more than she talks. She startles by her

silence and by that deep-reaching glance of intense fixity. No educated person could see her without thinking of Cleopatra, that dark little woman who almost changed the face of the world. But in Camille the natural animal is so complete, so self-sufficing, of a nature so leonine, that a man, however little of a Turk he may be, regrets the presence of so great a mind in such a body, and could wish that she were wholly woman. He fears to find the strange distortions of an abnormal soul. Do not cold analysis and matter-of-fact theory point to passions in such a woman? Does she judge, and not feel? Or, phenomenon still more terrible, does she not feel and judge at one and the same time? Able for all things through her brain, ought her course to be circumscribed by the limitations of other women? Has that intellectual strength weakened her heart? Has she no charm? Can she descend to those tender nothings by which a woman occupies, and soothes and interests the man she loves? Will she not cast aside a sentiment when it no longer responds to some vision of infinitude which she grasps and contemplates in her soul? Who can scale the heights to which her eyes have risen? Yes, a man fears to find in such a woman something unattainable, unpossessable, unconquerable. The woman of strong mind should remain a symbol; as a reality she must be feared. Camille Maupin is in some ways the living image of Schiller's Isis, seated in the darkness of the temple, at whose feet her priests find the dead bodies of the daring men who have consulted her.

The adventures of her life declared to be true by

the world, and which Camille has never disavowed, enforce the questions suggested by her personal appearance. Perhaps she likes those calumnies.

The nature of her beauty has not been without its influence on her fame; it has served it, just as her fortune and position have maintained her in society. If a sculptor desires to make a statue of Brittany let him take Mademoiselle des Touches for his model. That full-blooded, powerful temperament is the only nature capable of repelling the action of time. The constant nourishment of the pulp, so to speak, of that polished skin is an arm given to women by Nature to resist the invasion of wrinkles; in Camille's case it was aided by the calm impassibility of her features.

In 1817 this charming young woman opened her house to artists, authors of renown, learned and scientific men, and publicists,—a society toward which her tastes led her. Her salon resembled that of Baron Gérard, where men of rank mingled with men of distinction of all kinds, and the élite of Parisian women came. The parentage of Mademoiselle des Touches, and her fortune, increased by that of her aunt the nun, protected her in the attempt, always very difficult in Paris, to create a society. Her worldly independence was one reason of her success. Various ambitious mothers indulged the hope of inducing her to marry their sons, whose fortunes were out of proportion to the age of their escutcheons. Several peers of France, allured by the prospect of eighty thousand francs a year and a house magnificently appointed, took their womenkind, even the most fastidious and intractable, to visit her. The diplomatic world, always in search

of amusements of the intellect, came there and found enjoyment. Thus Mademoiselle des Touches, surrounded by so many forms of individual interests, was able to study the different comedies which passion, covetousness, and ambition make the generality of men perform, — even those who are highest in the social scale. She saw, early in life, the world as it is; and she was fortunate enough not to fall early into absorbing love, which warps the mind and faculties of a woman and prevents her from judging soberly.

Ordinarily a woman feels, enjoys, and judges, successively; hence three distinct ages, the last of which coincides with the mournful period of old age. In Mademoiselle des Touches this order was reversed. Her youth was wrapped in the snows of knowledge and the ice of reflection. This transposition is, in truth, an additional explanation of the strangeness of her life and the nature of her talent. She observed men at an age when most women can see only one man; she despised what other women admired; she detected falsehood in the flatteries they accept as truths; she laughed at things that made them serious. This contradiction of her life with that of others lasted long; but it came to a terrible end; she was destined to find in her soul a first love, young and fresh, at an age when women are summoned by Nature to renounce all love.

Meantime, a first affair in which she was involved has always remained a secret from the world. Félicité, like other women, was induced to believe that beauty of body was that of soul. She fell in love with a

face, and learned, to her cost, the folly of a man of gallantry, who saw nothing in her but a mere woman. It was some time before she recovered from the disgust she felt at this episode. Her distress was perceived by a friend, a man, who consoled her without personal after-thought, or, at any rate, he concealed any such motive if he had it. In him Félicité believed she found the heart and mind which were lacking to her former lover. He did, in truth, possess one of the most original minds of our age. He, too, wrote under a pseudonym, and his first publications were those of an adorer of Italy. Travel was the one form of education which Félicité lacked. A man of genius, a poet and a critic, he took Félicité to Italy in order to make known to her that country of all Art. This celebrated man, who is nameless, may be regarded as the master and maker of "Camille Maupin." He brought into order and shape the vast amount of knowledge already acquired by Félicité; increased it by study of the masterpieces with which Italy teems; gave her the frankness, freedom, and grace, epigrammatic, and intense, which is the character of his own talent (always rather fanciful as to form) which Camille Maupin modified by delicacy of sentiment and the softer terms of thought that are natural to a woman. He also roused in her a taste for German and English literature and made her learn both languages while travelling. In Rome, in 1820, Félicité was deserted for an Italian. Without that misery she might never have been celebrated. Napoleon called misfortune the midwife of genius. This event filled Mademoiselle des Touches, and forever, with that con-

tempt for men which later was to make her so strong. Félicité died, Camille Maupin was born.

She returned to Paris with Conti, the great musician, for whom she wrote the librettos of two operas. But she had no more illusions, and she became, at heart, unknown to the world, a sort of female Don Juan, without debts and without conquests. Encouraged by success, she published the two volumes of plays which at once placed the name of Camille Maupin in the list of illustrious anonymas. Next, she related her betrayed and deluded love in a short novel, one of the masterpieces of that period. This book, of a dangerous example, was classed with "Adolphe," a dreadful lamentation, the counterpart of which is found in Camille's work. The true secret of her literary metamorphosis and pseudonym has never been fully understood. Some delicate minds have thought it lay in a feminine desire to escape fame and remain obscure, while offering a man's name and work to criticism.

In spite of any such desire, if she had it, her celebrity increased daily, partly through the influence of her salon, partly from her own wit, the correctness of her judgments, and the solid worth of her acquirements. She became an authority; her sayings were quoted; she could no longer lay aside at will the functions with which Parisian society invested her. She came to be an acknowledged exception. The world bowed before the genius and position of this strange woman; it recognized and sanctioned her independence; women admired her mind, men her beauty. Her conduct was regulated by all social conventions.

Her friendships seemed purely platonic. There was, moreover, nothing of the female author about her. Mademoiselle des Touches is charming as a woman of the world, — languid when she pleases, indolent, coquettish, concerned about her toilet, pleased with the airy nothings so seductive to women and to poets. She understands very well that after Madame de Staël there is no place in this century for a Sappho, and that Ninon could not exist in Paris without *grands seigneurs* and a voluptuous court. She is the Ninon of the intellect; she adores Art and artists; she goes from the poet to the musician, from the sculptor to the prose-writer. Her heart is noble, endowed with a generosity that makes her a dupe; so filled is she with pity for sorrow, — filled also with contempt for the prosperous. She has lived since 1830, the centre of a choice circle, surrounded by tried friends who love her tenderly and esteem each other. Far from the noisy fuss of Madame de Staël, far from political strifes, she jokes about Camille Maupin, that junior of George Sand (whom she calls her brother Cain), whose recent fame has now eclipsed her own. Mademoiselle des Touches admires her fortunate rival with angelic composure, feeling no jealousy and no secret vexation.

Until the period when this history begins, she had led as happy a life as a woman strong enough to protect herself can be supposed to live. From 1817 to 1834 she had come some five or six times to Les Touches. Her first stay was after her first disillusion in 1818. The house was uninhabitable, and she sent her man of business to Guérande and took a lodging

for herself in the village. At that time she had no suspicion of her coming fame; she was sad, she saw no one; she wanted, as it were, to contemplate herself after her great disaster. She wrote to Paris to have the furniture necessary for a residence at Les Touches sent down to her. It came by a vessel to Nantes, thence by small boats to Croisic, from which little place it was transported, not without difficulty, over the sands to Les Touches. Workmen came down from Paris, and before long she occupied Les Touches, which pleased her immensely. She wanted to meditate over the events of her life, like a cloistered nun.

At the beginning of the winter she returned to Paris. The little town of Guérande was by this time roused to diabolical curiosity; its whole talk was of the Asiatic luxury displayed at Les Touches. Her man of business gave orders after her departure that visitors should be admitted to view the house. They flocked from the village of Batz, from Croisic, and from Savenay, as well as from Guérande. This public curiosity brought in an enormous sum to the family of the porter and gardener, not less, in two years, than seventeen francs.

After this, Mademoiselle des Touches did not revisit Les Touches for two years, not until her return from Italy. On that occasion she came by way of Croisic and was accompanied by Conti. It was some time before Guérande became aware of her presence. Her subsequent apparitions at Les Touches excited comparatively little interest. Her Parisian fame did not precede her; her man of business alone knew the secret of her writings and of her connection with the

celebrity of Camille Maupin. But at the period of which we are now writing the contagion of the new ideas had made some progress in Guérande, and several persons knew of the dual form of Mademoiselle des Touches' existence. Letters came to the post-office, directed to Camille Maupin at Les Touches. In short, the veil was rent away. In a region so essentially Catholic, archaic, and full of prejudice, the singular life of this illustrious woman would of course cause rumors, some of which, as we have seen, had reached the ears of the Abbé Grimont and alarmed him; such a life could never be comprehended in Guérande; in fact, to every mind, it seemed unnatural and improper.

Félicité, during her present stay, was not alone at Les Touches. She had a guest. That guest was Claude Vignon, a scornful and powerful writer who, though doing criticism only, has found means to give the public and literature the impression of a certain superiority. Mademoiselle des Touches had received this writer for the last seven years, as she had so many other authors, journalists, artists, and men of the world. She knew his nerveless nature, his laziness, his utter peunry, his indifference and disgust for all things, and yet by the way she was now conducting herself she seemed inclined to marry him. She explained her conduct, incomprehensible to her friends, in various ways, — by ambition, by the dread she felt of a lonely old age; she wanted to confide her future to a superior man, to whom her fortune would be a stepping-stone, and thus increase her own importance in the literary world.

With these apparent intentions she had brought Claude Vignon from Paris to Les Touches, as an eagle bears away a kid in its talons,—to study him, and decide upon some positive course. But, in truth, she was misleading both Calyste and Claude; she was not even thinking of marriage; her heart was in the throes of the most violent convulsion that could agitate a soul as strong as hers. She found herself the dupe of her own mind; too late she saw life lighted by the sun of love, shining as love shines in a heart of twenty.

Let us now see Camille's convent where this was happening.

VII.

LES TOUCHES.

A FEW hundred yards from Guérande the soil of Brittany comes to an end; the salt-marshes and the sandy dunes begin. We descend into a desert of sand, which the sea has left for a margin between herself and earth, by a rugged road through a ravine that has never seen a carriage. This desert contains waste tracts, ponds of unequal size, round the shores of which the salt is made on muddy banks, and a little arm of the sea which separates the mainland from the island of Croisic. Geographically, Croisic is really a peninsula; but as it holds to Brittany only by the beaches which connect it with the village of Batz (barren quicksands very difficult to cross), it may be more correct to call it an island.

At the point where the road from Croisic to Guérande turns off from the main road of *terra firma*, stands a country-house, surrounded by a large garden, remarkable for its trimmed and twisted pine-trees, some being trained to the shape of sun-shades, others, stripped of their branches, showing their reddened trunks in spots where the bark has peeled. These trees, victims of hurricanes, growing against wind and tide (for them the saying is literally true), prepare the mind for the strange and depressing sight of the

marshes and the dunes, which resemble a stiffened ocean. The house, fairly well built of a species of slaty stone with granite courses, has no architecture; it presents to the eye a plain wall with windows at regular intervals. These windows have small leaded panes on the ground-floor and large panes on the upper floor. Above are the attics, which stretch the whole length of an enormously high pointed roof, with two gables and two large dormer windows on each side of it. Under the triangular point of each gable a circular window opens its cyclopic eye, westerly to the sea, easterly on Guérande. One façade of the house looks on the road to Guérande, the other on the desert at the end of which is Croisic; beyond that little town is the open sea. A brook escapes through an opening in the park wall which skirts the road to Croisic, crosses the road, and is lost in the sands beyond it.

The grayish tones of the house harmonize admirably with the scene it overlooks. The park is an oasis in the surrounding desert, at the entrance of which the traveller comes upon a mud-but, where the custom-house officials lie in wait for him. This house without land (for the bulk of the estate is really in Guérande) derives an income from the marshes and a few outlying farms of over ten thousand francs a year. Such is the fief of Les Touches, from which the Revolution lopped its fendal rights. The *paludiers*, however, continue to call it "the châtean," and they would still say "seigneur" if the fief were not now in the female line. When Félicité set about restoring Les Touches, she was careful, artist that she is, not to change the desolate exterior which gives the look of a prison to the

isolated structure. The sole change was at the gate, which she enlivened by two brick columns supporting an arch, beneath which carriages pass into the court-yard where she planted trees.

The arrangement of the ground-floor is that of nearly all country houses built a hundred years ago. It was, evidently, erected on the ruins of some old castle formerly perched there. A large panelled entrance-hall has been turned by Félicité into a billiard-room; from it opens an immense salon with six windows, and the dining-room. The kitchen communicates with the dining-room through an office. Camille has displayed a noble simplicity in the arrangement of this floor, carefully avoiding all splendid decoration. The salon, painted gray, is furnished in old mahogany with green silk coverings. The furniture of the dining-room comprises four great buffets, also of mahogany, chairs covered with horsehair, and superb engravings by Audran in mahogany frames. The old staircase, of wood with heavy balusters, is covered all over with a green carpet.

On the floor above are two suites of rooms separated by the staircase. Mademoiselle des Touches has taken for herself the one that looks toward the sea and the marshes, and arranged it with a small salon, a large chamber, and two cabinets, one for a dressing-room, the other for a study and writing-room. The other suite, she has made into two separate apartments for guests, each with a bedroom, an antechamber, and a cabinet. The servants have rooms in the attic. The rooms for guests are furnished with what is strictly necessary, and no more. A certain fantastic luxury has been

reserved for her own apartment. In that sombre and melancholy habitation, looking out upon the sombre and melancholy landscape, she wanted the most fantastic creations of art that she could find. The little salon is hung with Gobelin tapestry, framed in marvellously carved oak. The windows are draped with the heavy silken hangings of a past age, a brocade shot with crimson and gold against green and yellow, gathered into mighty pleats and trimmed with fringes and cords and tassels worthy of a church. This salon contains a chest or cabinet, worth in these days seven or eight thousand francs, a carved ebony table, a secretary with many drawers, inlaid with arabesques of ivory and bought in Venice, with other noble Gothic furniture. Here too are pictures and articles of choice workmanship bought in 1818, at a time when no one suspected the ultimate value of such treasures. Her bedroom is of the period of Louis XV. and strictly exact to it. Here we see the carved wooden bedstead painted white, with the arched head-board surmounted by Cupids scattering flowers, and the canopy above it adorned with plumes; the hangings of blue silk; the Pompadour dressing-table with its laces and mirror; together with bits of furniture of singular shape, — a “duchesse,” a chaise-longue, a stiff little sofa, — with window-curtains of silk, like that of the furniture, lined with pink satin, and caught back with silken ropes, and a carpet of Savonnerie; in short, we find here all those elegant, rich, sumptuous, and dainty things in the midst of which the women of the eighteenth century lived and made love.

The study, entirely of the present day, presents, in

contrast with the Louis XV. gallantries, a charming collection of mahogany furniture; it resembles a boudoir; the bookshelves are full, but the fascinating trivialities of a woman's existence encumber it; in the midst of which an inquisitive eye perceives with uneasy surprise pistols, a narghile, a riding-whip, a hammock, a rifle, a man's blouse, tobacco, pipes, a knapsack, — a bizarre combination which paints Félicité.

Every great soul, entering that room, would be struck with the peculiar beauty of the landscape which spreads its broad savanna beyond the park, the last vegetation on the continent. The melancholy squares of water, divided by little paths of white salt crust, along which the salt-makers pass (dressed in white) to rake up and gather the salt into *mulons*; a space which the saline exhalations prevent all birds from crossing, stifling thus the efforts of botanic nature; those sands where the eye is soothed only by one little hardy persistent plant bearing rosy flowers and the Chartreux pansy; that lake of salt water, the sandy dunes, the view of Croisic, a miniature town afloat like Venice on the sea; and, finally the mighty ocean tossing its foaming fringe upon the granite rocks as if the better to bring out their wierd formations — that sight uplifts the mind although it saddens it; an effect produced at last by all that is sublime, creating a regretful yearning for things unknown and yet perceived by the soul on far-off heights. These wild and savage harmonies are for great spirits and great sorrows only.

This desert scene, where at times the sun rays, reflected by the water, by the sands, whitened the

village of Batz and rippled on the roofs of Croisic with pitiless brilliancy, filled Camille's dreaming mind for days together. She seldom looked to the cool, refreshing scenes, the groves, the flowery meadows around Guérande. Her soul was struggling to endure a horrible inward anguish.

No sooner did Calyste see the vanes of the two gables shooting up beyond the furze of the roadside and the distorted heads of the pines, than the air seemed lighter; Guérande was a prison to him; his life was at Les Touches. Who will not understand the attraction it presented to a youth in his position. A love like that of Chérubin, had flung him at the feet of a person who was a great and grand thing to him before he thought of her as a woman, and it had survived the repeated and inexplicable refusals of Félicité. This sentiment, which was more the need of loving than love itself, had not escaped the terrible power of Camille for analysis; hence, possibly, her rejection,—a generosity unperceived, of course, by Calyste.

At Les Touches were displayed to the ravished eyes of the ignorant young countryman, the riches of a new world; he heard, as it were, another language, hitherto unknown to him and sonorous. He listened to the poetic sounds of the finest music, that surpassing music of the nineteenth century, in which melody and harmony blend or struggle on equal terms,—a music in which song and instrumentation have reached a hitherto unknown perfection. He saw before his eyes the works of modern painters, those of the French school, to-day the heir of Italy, Spain, and Flanders,

in which talent has become so common that hearts, weary of talent, are calling aloud for genius. He read there those works of imagination, those amazing creations of modern literature which produced their full effect upon his unused heart. In short, the great Nineteenth Century appeared to him, in all its collective magnificence, its criticising spirit, its desires for renovation in all directions, and its vast efforts, nearly all of them on the scale of the giant who cradled the infancy of the century in his banners and sang to it hymns with a lullaby of cannon.

Initiated by Félicité into the grandeur of all these things, which may, perhaps, escape the eyes of those who work them, Calyste gratified at Les Touches the taste for the glorious, powerful at his age, and that artless admiration, the first love of adolescence, which is always irritated by criticism. It is so natural that flame should rise! He listened to that charming Parisian raillery, that graceful satire which revealed to him French wit and the qualities of the French mind, and awakened in him a thousand ideas, which might have slumbered forever in the soft torpor of his family life. For him, Mademoiselle des Touches was the mother of his intellect. She was so kind to him; a woman is always adorable to a man in whom she inspires love, even when she seems not to share it.

At the present time Félicité was giving him music-lessons. To him the grand apartments on the lower floor, and her private rooms above, so coquettish, so artistic, were vivified, were animated by a light, a spirit, a supernatural atmosphere, strange and undefinable. The modern world with its poesy was sharply

contrasted with the dull and patriarchal world of Guérande, in the two systems brought face to face before him. On one side all the thousand developments of Art, on the other the sameness of uncivilized Brittany. No one will therefore ask why the poor lad, bored like his mother with the pleasures of *mouche*, quivered as he approached the house, and rang the bell, and crossed the court-yard. Such emotions, we may remark, do not assail a mature man, trained to the ups and downs of life, whom nothing surprises, being prepared for all.

As the door opened, Calyste, hearing the sound of the piano, supposed that Camille was in the salon; but when he entered the billiard-hall he no longer heard it. Camille, he thought, must be playing on a small upright piano brought by Conti from England and placed by her in her own little salon. He began to run up the stairs, where the thick carpet smothered the sound of his steps; but he went more slowly as he neared the top, perceiving something unusual and extraordinary about the music. Félicité was playing for herself only; she was communing with her own being.

Instead of entering the room, the young man sat down upon a Gothic seat covered with green velvet, which stood on the landing beneath a window artistically framed in carved woods stained and varnished. Nothing was ever more mysteriously melancholy than Camille's improvisation; it seemed like the cry of a soul *de profundis* to God — from the depths of a grave! The heart of the young lover recognized the cry of despairing love, the prayer of a hidden plaint,

the groan of repressed affliction. Camille had varied, modified, and lengthened the introduction to the cavatina: "Mercy for thee, mercy for me!" which is nearly the whole of the fourth act of "Robert le Diable." She now suddenly sang the words in a heart-rending manner, and then as suddenly interrupted herself. Calyste entered, and saw the reason. Poor Camille Maupin! poor Félicité! She turned to him a face bathed with tears, took out her handkerchief and dried them, and said, simply, without affectation, "Good-morning." She was beautiful as she sat there in her morning gown. On her head was one of those red chenille nets, much worn in those days, through which the coils of her black hair shone, escaping here and there. A short upper garment made like a Greek peplum gave to view a pair of cambric trousers with embroidered frills, and the prettiest of Turkish slippers, red and gold.

"What is the matter?" cried Calyste.

"He has not returned," she replied, going to a window and looking out upon the sands, the sea and the marshes.

This answer explained all. Camille was awaiting Claude Vignon.

"You are anxious about him?" asked Calyste.

"Yes," she answered with a sadness the lad was too ignorant to analyze.

He started to leave the room.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To find him," he replied.

"Dear child!" she said, taking his hand and drawing him toward her with one of those moist glances

which are to a youthful soul the best of recompenses. "You are distracted! Where could you find him on that wide shore?"

"I will find him."

"Your mother would be in mortal terror. Stay. Besides, I choose it," she said, making him sit down upon the sofa. "Don't pity me. The tears you see are the tears a woman likes to shed. We have a faculty that is not in man,—that of abandoning ourselves to our nervous nature and driving our feelings to an extreme. By imagining certain situations and encouraging the imagination we end in tears, and sometimes in serious states of illness or disorder. The fancies of women are not the action of the mind; they are of the heart. You have come just in time; solitude is bad for me. I am not the dupe of his professed desire to go to Croisic and see the rocks and the dunes and the salt-marshes without me. He meant to leave us alone together; he is jealous, or, rather, he pretends jealousy, and you are young, you are handsome."

"Why not have told me this before? What must I do? must I stay away?" asked Calyste, with difficulty restraining his tears, one of which rolled down his cheek and touched Félicité deeply.

"You are an angel!" she cried. Then she gayly sang the "Stay! stay!" of Matilde in "Guillaume Tell," taking all gravity from that magnificent answer of the princess to her subject. "He only wants to make me think he loves me better than he really does," she said. "He knows how much I desire his happiness," she went on, looking attentively at Calyste.

“Perhaps he feels humiliated to be inferior to me there. Perhaps he has suspicions about you and means to surprise us. But even if his only crime is to take his pleasure without me, and not to associate me with the ideas this new place gives him, is not that enough? Ah! I am no more loved by that great brain than I was by the musician, by the poet, by the soldier! Sterne is right; names signify much; mine is a bitter sarcasm. I shall die without finding in any man the love which fills my heart, the poesy that I have in my soul —”

She stopped, her arms pendent, her head lying back on the cushions, her eyes, stupid with thought, fixed on a pattern of the carpet. The pain of great minds has something grandiose and imposing about it; it reveals a vast extent of soul which the thought of the spectator extends still farther. Such souls share the privileges of royalty whose affections belong to a people and so affect a world.

“Why did you reject my —” said Calyste; but he could not end his sentence. Camille’s beautiful hand laid upon his eloquently interrupted him.

“Nature changed her laws in granting me a dozen years of youth beyond my due,” she said. “I rejected your love from egotism. Sooner or later the difference in our ages must have parted us. I am thirteen years older than *he*, and even that is too much.”

“You will be beautiful at sixty,” cried Calyste, heroically.

“God grant it,” she answered, smiling. “Besides, dear child, I *want* to love. In spite of his cold heart, his lack of imagination, his cowardly indifference, and

the envy which consumes him, I believe there is greatness behind those tatters; I hope to galvanize that heart, to save him from himself, to attach him to me. Alas! alas! I have a clear-seeing mind, but a blind heart."

She was terrible in her knowledge of herself. She suffered and analyzed her sufferings as Cuvier and Dupuytren explained to friends the fatal advance of their disease and the progress that death was making in their bodies. Camille Maupin knew the passion within her as those men of science knew their own anatomy.

"I have brought him here to judge him, and he is already bored," she continued. "He pines for Paris, I tell him; the nostalgia of criticism is on him; he has no author to pluck, no system to undermine, no poet to drive to despair, and he dares not commit some debauch in this house which might lift for a moment the burden of his ennui. Alas! my love is not real enough, perhaps, to soothe his brain; I don't intoxicate him! Make him drunk at dinner to-night and I shall know if I am right. I will say I am ill, and stay in my own room."

Calyste turned scarlet from his neck to his forehead; even his ears were on fire.

"Oh! forgive me," she cried. "How can I heedlessly deprave your girlish innocence! Forgive me, Calyste —" She paused. "There are some superb, consistent natures who say at a certain age: 'If I had my life to live over again, I would do the same things.' I who do not think myself weak, I say, 'I would be a woman like your mother, Calyste.' To have

a Calyste, oh! what happiness! I could be a humble and submissive woman — And yet, I have done no harm except to myself. But alas! dear child, a woman cannot stand alone in society except it be in what is called a primitive state. Affections which are not in harmony with social or with natural laws, affections that are not obligatory, in short, escape us. Suffering for suffering, as well be useful where we can. What care I for those children of my cousin Faucombe? I have not seen them these twenty years, and they are married to merchants. You are my son, who have never cost me the miseries of motherhood; I shall leave you my fortune and make you happy — at least, so far as money can do so, dear treasure of beauty and grace that nothing should ever change or blast.”

“You would not take my love,” said Calyste, “and I shall return your fortune to your heirs.”

“Child!” answered Camille, in a guttural voice, letting the tears roll down her cheeks. “Will nothing save me from myself?” she added, presently.

“You said you had a history to tell me, and a letter to — ” said the generous youth, wishing to divert her thoughts from her grief; but she did not let him finish.

“You are right to remind me of that. I will be an honest woman before all else. I will sacrifice no one — Yes, it was too late yesterday, but to-day we have time,” she said, in a cheerful tone. “I will keep my promise; and while I tell you that history I will sit by the window and watch the road to the marshes.”

Calyste arranged a great Gothic chair for her near the window, and opened one of the sashes. Camille Maupin, who shared the oriental taste of her illustrious sister-author, took a magnificent Persian narghile, given to her by an ambassador. She filled the nipple with patchouli, cleaned the *bochettino*, perfumed the goose-quill, which she attached to the mouthpiece and used only once, set fire to the yellow leaves, placing the vase with its long neck enamelled in blue and gold at some distance from her, and rang the bell for tea.

“Will you have cigarettes? — Ah! I am always forgetting that you do not smoke. Purity such as yours is so rare! The hand of Eve herself, fresh from the hand of her Maker, is alone innocent enough to stroke your cheek.”

Calyste colored; sitting down on a stool at Camille's feet, he did not see the deep emotion that seemed for a moment to overcome her.

VIII.

LA MARQUISE BÉATRIX.

“I PROMISED you this tale of the past, and here it is,” said Camille: “The person from whom I received that letter yesterday, and who may be here to-morrow, is the Marquise de Rochefide. The old marquis (whose family is not as old as yours), after marrying his eldest daughter to a Portuguese grandee, was anxious to find an alliance among the higher nobility for his son, in order to obtain for him the peerage he had never been able to get for himself. The Comtesse de Montcornet told him of a young lady in the department of the Orne, a Mademoiselle Béatrix-Maximilienne-Rose de Casteran, the youngest daughter of the Marquis de Casteran, who wished to marry his two daughters without dowries in order to reserve his whole fortune for the Comte de Casteran, his son. The Casterans are, it seems, of the bluest blood. Béatrix, born and brought up at the château de Casteran, was twenty years old at the time of her marriage in 1828. She was remarkable for what you provincials call originality, which is simply independence of ideas, enthusiasm, a feeling for the beautiful, and a certain impulse and ardor toward the things of Art. You may believe a poor woman who has allowed herself to be

drawn along the same lines, there is nothing more dangerous for a woman. If she follows them, they lead her where you see me, and where the marquise came, — to the verge of abysses. Men alone have the staff on which to lean as they skirt those precipices, — a force which is lacking to most women, but which, if we do possess it, makes abnormal beings of us. Her old grandmother, the dowager de Casteran, was well pleased to see her marry a man to whom she was superior in every way. The Rochefides were equally satisfied with the Casterans, who connected them with the Verneuls, the d'Esgrignons, the Troisvilles, and gave them a peerage for their son in that last big batch of peers made by Charles X., but revoked by the revolution of July. The first days of marriage are perilous for little minds as well as for great loves. Rochefide, being a fool, mistook his wife's ignorance for coldness; he classed her among frigid, lymphatic women, and made that an excuse to return to his bachelor life, relying on the coldness of the marquise, her pride, and the thousand barriers that the life of a great lady sets up about a woman in Paris. You'll know what I mean when you go there. People said to Rochefide: 'You are very lucky to possess a cold wife who will never have any but head passions. She will always be content if she can shine; her fancies are purely artistic, her desires will be satisfied if she can make a salon, and collect about her distinguished minds; her debauches will be in music and her orgies literary.' Rochefide, however, is not an ordinary fool; he has as much conceit and vanity as a clever man, which gives him a mean and squinting jealousy,

brutal when it comes to the surface, lurking and cowardly for six months, and murderous the seventh. He thought he was deceiving his wife, and yet he feared her, — two causes for tyranny when the day came on which the marquise let him see that she was charitably assuming indifference to his unfaithfulness. I analyze all this in order to explain her conduct. Béatrix had the keenest admiration for me; there is but one step, however, from admiration to jealousy. I have one of the most remarkable salons in Paris; she wished to make herself another; and in order to do so she attempted to draw away my circle. I don't know how to keep those who wish to leave me. She obtained the superficial people who are friends with every one from mere want of occupation, and whose object is to get out of a salon as soon as they have entered it; but she did not have time to make herself a real society. In those days I thought her consumed with a desire for celebrity of one kind or another. Nevertheless, she has really much grandeur of soul, a regal pride, distinct ideas, and a marvellous facility for apprehending and understanding all things; she can talk metaphysics and music, theology and painting. You will see her, as a mature woman, what the rest of us saw her as a bride. And yet there is something of affectation about her in all this. She has too much the air of knowing abstruse things, — Chinese, Hebrew, hieroglyphics perhaps, or the papyrus that they wrapped round mummies. Personally, Béatrix is one of those blondes beside whom Eve the fair would seem a negress. She is slender and straight and white as a church taper; her face is long

and pointed; the skin is capricious, to-day like cambric, to-morrow darkened with little speckles beneath its surface, as if her blood had left a deposit of dust there during the night. Her forehead is magnificent, though rather daring. The pupils of her eyes are pale sea-green, floating on their white balls under thin lashes and lazy eyelids. Her eyes have dark rings around them often; her nose, which describes one-quarter of a circle, is pinched about the nostrils; very shrewd and clever, but supercilious. She has an Austrian mouth; the upper lip has more character than the lower, which drops disdainfully. Her pale cheeks have no color unless some very keen emotion moves her. Her chin is rather fat; mine is not thin, and perhaps I do wrong to tell you that women with fat chins are exacting in love. She has one of the most exquisite waists I ever saw; the shoulders are beautiful, but the bust has not developed as well, and the arms are thin. She has, however, an easy carriage and manner, which redeems all such defects and sets her beauties in full relief. Nature has given her that princess air which can never be acquired; it becomes her, and reveals at sudden moments the woman of high birth. Without being faultlessly beautiful, or prettily pretty, she produces, when she chooses, ineffaceable impressions. She has only to put on a gown of cherry velvet with clouds of lace, and wreath with roses that angelic hair of hers, which resembles floods of light, and she becomes divine. If, on some excuse or other, she could wear the costume of the time when women had long, pointed bodices, rising, slim and slender, from voluminous brocaded skirts

with folds so heavy that they stood alone, and could hide her arms in those wadded sleeves with ruffles, from which the hand comes out like a pistil from a calyx, and could fling back the curls of her hair into the jewelled knot behind her head, Béatrix would hold her own victoriously with ideal beauties like *that* — ”

And Félicité showed Calyste a fine copy of a picture by Miéris, in which was a woman robed in white satin, standing with a paper in her hand, and singing with a Brabançon seigneur, while a negro beside them poured golden Spanish wine into a goblet, and the old housekeeper in the background arranged some biscuits.

“Fair women, blondes,” said Camille, “have the advantage over us poor brown things of a precious diversity; there are a hundred ways for a blonde to charm, and only one for a brunette. Besides, blondes are more womanly; we are too like men, we French brunettes — Well, well!” she cried, “pray don’t fall in love with Béatrix from the portrait I am making of her, like that prince, I forget his name, in the Arabian Nights. You would be too late, my dear boy.”

These words were said pointedly. The admiration depicted on the young man’s face was more for the picture than for the painter whose *faire* was failing of its purpose. As she spoke, Félicité was employing all the resources of her eloquent physiognomy.

“Blond as she is, however,” she went on, “Béatrix has not the grace of her color; her lines are severe; she is elegant, but hard; her face has a harsh contour, though at times it reveals a soul with Southern pas

sions; an angel flashes out and then expires. Her eyes are thirsty. She looks best when seen full face; the profile has an air of being squeezed between two doors. You will see if I am mistaken. I will tell you now what made us intimate friends. For three years, from 1828 to 1831, Béatrix, while enjoying the last fêtes of the Restoration, making the round of the salons, going to court, taking part in the fancy-balls of the *Élysée-Bourbon*, was all the while judging men, and things, events, and life itself, from the height of her own thought. Her mind was busy. These first years of the bewilderment the world caused her prevented her heart from waking up. From 1830 to 1831 she spent the time of the revolutionary disturbance at her husband's country place, where she was bored like a saint in paradise. On her return to Paris she became convinced, perhaps justly, that the revolution of July, in the minds of some persons purely political, would prove to be a moral revolution. The social class to which she belonged, not being able, during its unhoped-for triumph in the fifteen years of the Restoration to reconstruct itself, was about to go to pieces, bit by bit, under the battering-ram of the bourgeoisie. She heard the famous words of Monsieur Lainé: 'Kings are departing!' This conviction, I believe, was not without its influence on her conduct. She took an intellectual part in the new doctrines, which swarmed, during the three years succeeding July, 1830, like gnats in the sunshine, and turned some female heads. But, like all nobles, Béatrix, while thinking these novel ideas superb, wanted always to protect the nobility. Finding be-

fore long that there was no place in this new régime for individual superiority, seeing that the higher nobility were beginning once more the mute opposition it had formerly made to Napoleon, — which was, in truth, its wisest course under an empire of deeds and facts, but which in an epoch of moral causes was equivalent to abdication, — she chose personal happiness rather than such eclipse. About the time we were all beginning to breathe again, Béatrix met at my house a man with whom I had expected to end my days, — Gennaro Conti, the great composer, a man of Neapolitan origin, though born in Marseilles. Conti has a brilliant mind; as a composer he has talent, though he will never attain to the first rank. Without Rossini, without Meyerbeer, he might perhaps have been taken for a man of genius. He has one advantage over those men, — he is in vocal music what Paganini is on the violin, Liszt on the piano, Taglioni in the ballet, and what the famous Garat was; at any rate he recalls that great singer to those who knew him. His is not a voice, my friend, it is a soul. When its song replies to certain ideas, certain states of feeling difficult to describe in which a woman sometimes finds herself, that woman is lost. The marquise conceived the maddest passion for him, and took him from me. The act was provincial, I allow, but it was all fair play. She won my esteem and friendship by the way she behaved to me. She thought me a woman who was likely to defend her own; she did not know that to me the most ridiculous thing in the world is such a struggle. She came to see me. That woman, proud as she is, was so in love

that she told me her secret and made me the arbiter of her destiny. She was really adorable, and she kept her place as woman and as marquise in my eyes. I must tell you, dear friend, that while women are sometimes bad, they have hidden grandeurs in their souls that men can never appreciate. Well, as I seem to be making my last will and testament like a woman on the verge of old age, I shall tell you that I was ever faithful to Conti, and should have been till death, and yet I *know him*. His nature is charming, apparently, and detestable beneath its surface. He is a charlatan in matters of the heart. There are some men, like Nathan, of whom I have already spoken to you, who are charlatans externally, and yet honest. Such men lie to themselves. Mounted on their stilts they think they are on their feet, and perform their jugglery with a sort of innocence; their humbuggery is in their blood; they are born comedians, braggarts; extravagant in form as a Chinese vase; perhaps they even laugh at themselves. Their personality is generous; like Murat's kingly garments, it attracts danger. But Conti's duplicity will be known only to the women who love him. In his art he has that deep Italian jealousy which led the Carlone to murder Piola, and stuck a stiletto into Paesiello. That terrible envy lurks beneath the warmest comradeship. Conti has not the courage of his vice; he smiles at Meyerbeer and flatters him, when he fain would tear him to bits. He knows his weakness, and cultivates an appearance of sincerity; his vanity still further leads him to play at sentiments which are far indeed from his real heart. He represents himself as an artist who

receives his inspirations from heaven; Art is something saintly and sacred to him; he is fanatic; he is sublime in his contempt for worldliness; his eloquence seems to come from the deepest convictions. He is a seer, a demon, a god, an angel. Calyste, although I warn you about him, you will be his dupe. That Southern nature, that impassioned artist is cold as a well-rope. Listen to him: the artist is a missionary. Art is a religion, which has its priests and ought to have its martyrs. Once started on that theme, Gennaro reaches the most dishevelled pathos that any German professor of philosophy ever spluttered to his audience. You admire his convictions, but he has n't any. Bearing his hearers to heaven on a song which seems a mysterious fluid shedding love, he casts an ecstatic glance upon them; he is examining their enthusiasm; he is asking himself: 'Am I really a god to them?' and he is also thinking: 'I ate too much maccaroni to-day.' He is insatiablé of applause, and he wins it. He delights, he is beloved; he is admired whensoever he will. He owes his success more to his voice than to his talent as a composer, though he would rather be a man of genius like Rossini than a performer like Rubini. I had committed the folly of attaching myself to him, and I was determined and resigned to deck this idol to the end. Conti, like a great many artists, is dainty in all his ways; he likes his ease, his enjoyments; he is always carefully, even elegantly dressed. I do respect his courage; he is brave; bravery, they say, is the only viriue into which hypocrisy cannot enter. While we were travelling I saw his courage tested; he risked the life he loved;

and yet, strange contradiction! I have seen him, in Paris, commit what I call the cowardice of thought. My friend, all this was known to me. I said to the poor marquise: 'You don't know into what a gulf you are plunging. You are the Perseus of a poor Andromeda; you release me from my rock. If he loves you, so much the better! but I doubt it; he loves no one but himself.' Gennaro was transported to the seventh heaven of pride. I was not a marquise, I was not born a Casteran, and he forgot me in a day. I then gave myself the savage pleasure of probing that nature to the bottom. Certain of the result, I wanted to see the twistings and turnings Conti would perform. My dear child, I saw in one week actual horrors of sham sentiment, infamous buffooneries of feeling. I will not tell you about them; you shall see the man here in a day or two. He now knows that I know him, and he hates me accordingly. If he could stab me with safety to himself I should n't be alive two seconds. I have never said one word of all this to Béatrix. The last and constant insult which Gennaro offers me is to suppose that I am capable of communicating my sad knowledge of him to her; but he has no belief in the good feeling of any human being. Even now he is playing a part with me; he is posing as a man who is wretched at having left me. You will find what I may call the most penetrating cordiality about him; he is winning; he is chivalrous. To him, all women are madonnas. One must live with him long before we get behind the veil of this false chivalry and learn the invisible signs of his humbug. His tone of con-

viction about himself might almost deceive the Deity. You will be entrapped, my dear child, by his catlike manners, and you will never believe in the profound and rapid arithmetic of his inmost thought. But enough; let us leave him. I pushed indifference so far as to receive them together in my house. This circumstance kept that most perspicacious of all societies, the great world of Paris, ignorant of the affair. Though intoxicated with pride, Gennaro was compelled to dissimulate; and he did it admirably. But violent passions will have their freedom at any cost. Before the end of the year, Béatrix whispered in my ear one evening: 'My dear Félicité, I start to-morrow for Italy with Conti.' I was not surprised; she regarded herself as united for life to Gennaro, and she suffered from the restraints imposed upon her; she escaped one evil by rushing into a greater. Conti was wild with happiness, — the happiness of vanity alone. 'That's what it is to love truly,' he said to me. 'How many women are there who could sacrifice their lives, their fortune, their reputation?' — 'Yes, she loves you,' I replied, 'but you do not love her.' He was furious, and made me a scene; he stormed, he declaimed, he depicted his love, declaring that he had never supposed it possible to love as much. I remained impassible, and lent him money for his journey, which, being unexpected, found him unprepared. Béatrix left a letter for her husband and started the next day for Italy. There she has remained two years; she has written to me several times, and her letters are enchanting. The poor child attaches herself to me as the only woman who will comprehend her. She says she

adores me. Want of money has compelled Gennaro to accept an offer to write a French opera; he does not find in Italy the pecuniary gains which composers obtain in Paris. Here 's the letter I received yesterday from Béatrix. Take it and read it; you can now understand it, — that is, if it is possible, at your age, to analyze the things of the heart.”

So saying, she held out the letter to him.

At this moment Claude Vignon entered the room. At his unexpected apparition Calyste and Félicité were both silent for a moment,— she from surprise, he from a vague uneasiness. The vast forehead, broad and high, of the new-comer, who was bald at the age of thirty-seven, now seemed darkened by annoyance. His firm, judicial mouth expressed a habit of chilling sarcasm. Claude Vignon is imposing, in spite of the precocious deteriorations of a face once magnificent, and now grown haggard. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five he strongly resembled the divine Raffaele. But his nose, that feature of the human face that changes most, is growing to a point; the countenance is sinking into mysterious depressions, the outlines are thickening; leaden tones predominate in the complexion, giving tokens of weariness, although the fatigues of this young man are not apparent; perhaps some bitter solitude has aged him, or the abuse of his gift of comprehension. He scrutinizes the thought of every one, yet without definite aim or system. The pickaxe of his criticism demolishes, it never constructs. Thus his lassitude is that of a mechanic, not of an architect. The eyes, of a pale blue, once very brilliant, are clouded now by some

hidden pain, or dulled by gloomy sadness. Excesses have laid dark tints above the eyelids; the temples have lost their freshness. The chin, of incomparable distinction, is getting doubled, but without dignity. His voice, never sonorous, is weakening; without being either hoarse or extinct, it touches the confines of hoarseness and extinction. The impassibility of that fine head, the fixity of that glance, cover irresolution and weakness, which the keenly intelligent and sarcastic smile belies. The weakness lies wholly in action, not in thought; there are traces of an encyclopedic comprehension on that brow, and in the habitual movement of a face that is childlike and splendid both. The man is tall, slightly bent already, like all those who bear the weight of a world of thought. Such long, tall bodies are never remarkable for continuous effort or creative activity. Charlemagne, Belisarius, and Constantine are noted exceptions to this rule.

Certainly Claude Vignon presents a variety of mysteries to be solved. In the first place, he is very simple and very wily. Though he falls into excesses with the readiness of a courtesan, his powers of thought remain untouched. Yet his intellect, which is competent to criticise art, science, literature, and politics, is incompetent to guide his external life. Claude contemplates himself within the domain of his intellectual kingdom, and abandons his outer man with Diogenic indifference. Satisfied to penetrate all, to comprehend all by thought, he despises materialities; and yet, if it becomes a question of creating, doubt assails him; he sees obstacles, he is not inspired by

beauties, and while he is debating means, he sits with his arms pendent, accomplishing nothing. He is the Turk of the intellect made somnolent by meditation. Criticism is his opium; his harem of books to read disgusts him with real work. Indifferent to small things as well as great things, he is sometimes compelled, by the very weight of his head, to fall into a debauch, and abdicate for a few hours the fatal power of omnipotent analysis. He is far too preoccupied with the wrong side of genius, and Camille Maupin's desire to put him back on the right side is easily conceivable. The task was an attractive one. Claude Vignon thinks himself a great politician as well as a great writer; but this unpublished Macchiavelli laughs within himself at all ambitions; he knows what he can do; he has instinctively taken the measure of his future on his faculties; he sees his greatness, but he also sees obstacles, grows alarmed or disgusted, lets the time roll by, and does not go to work. Like Étienne Lousteau the feuilletonist, like Nathan the dramatic author, like Blondet, another journalist, he came from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, to which we owe the greater number of our writers.

"Which way did you come?" asked Mademoiselle des Touches, coloring with either pleasure or surprise.

"By the door," replied Claude Vignon, dryly.

"Oh," she cried, shrugging her shoulders, "I am aware that you are not a man to climb in by a window."

"Scaling a window is a badge of honor for a beloved woman."

"Enough!" said Félicité.

“Am I in the way?” asked Claude.

“Monsieur,” said Calyste, artlessly, “this letter —”

“Pray keep it; I ask no questions; at our age we understand such affairs,” he answered, interrupting Calyste with a sardonic air.

“But, monsieur,” began Calyste, much provoked.

“Calm yourself, young man; I have the utmost indulgence for sentimeuts.”

“My dear Calyste,” said Camille, wishing to speak.

“‘Dear’?” said Vignon, interrupting her.

“Claude is joking,” said Camille, continuing her remarks to Calyste. “He is wrong to do it with you, who know nothing of Parisian ways.”

“I did not know that I was joking,” said Claude Vignon, very gravely.

“Which way did you come?” asked Félicité again.

“I have been watching the road to Croisic for the last two hours.”

“Not all the time,” replied Vignon.

“You are too bad to jest in this way.”

“Am I jesting?”

Calyste rose.

“Why should you go so soon? You are certainly at your ease here,” said Vignon.

“Quite the contrary,” replied the angry young Breton, to whom Camille Maupin stretched out a hand, which he took and kissed, dropping a tear upon it, after which he took his leave.

“I should like to be that little young man,” said the critic, sitting down, and taking one end of the hookah.

“How he will love!”

“Too much; for then he will not be loved in return,”

replied Mademoiselle des Touches. "Madame de Rochefide is coming here," she added.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Claude. "With Conti?"

"She will stay here alone, but he accompanies her."

"Have they quarrelled?"

"No."

"Play me a sonata of Beethoven's; I know nothing of the music he wrote for the piano."

Claude began to fill the tube of the hookah with Turkish tobacco, all the while examining Camille much more attentively than she observed. A dreadful thought oppressed him; he fancied he was being used for a blind by this woman. The situation was a novel one.

Calyste went home thinking no longer of Béatrix de Rochefide and her letter; he was furious against Claude Vignon for what he considered the utmost indelicacy, and he pitied poor Félicité. How was it possible to be beloved by that sublime creature and not adore her on his knees, not believe her on the faith of a glance or a smile? He felt a desire to turn and rend that cold, pale spectre of a man. Ignorant he might be, as Félicité had told him, of the tricks of thought of the jesters of the press, but one thing he knew — Love was the human religion.

When his mother saw him entering the court-yard she uttered an exclamation of joy, and Zéphirine whistled for Mariotte.

"Mariotte, the boy is coming! cook the fish!"

"I see him, mademoiselle," replied the woman.

Fanny, uneasy at the sadness she saw on her son's

brow, picked up her worsted-work; the old aunt took out her knitting. The baron gave his arm-chair to his son and walked about the room, as if to stretch his legs before going out to take a turn in the garden. No Flemish or Dutch picture ever presented an interior in tones more mellow, peopled with faces and forms so harmoniously blending. The handsome young man in his black velvet coat, the mother, still so beautiful, and the aged brother and sister framed by that ancient hall, were a moving domestic harmony.

Fanny would fain have questioned Calyste, but he had already pulled a letter from his pocket, — that letter of the Marquise Béatrix, which was, perhaps, destined to destroy the happiness of this noble family. As he unfolded it, Calyste's awakened imagination showed him the marquise dressed as Camille Maupiu had fancifully depicted her.

From the Marquise de Rochefide to Mademoiselle des Touches.

GENOA, July 2.

I have not written to you since our stay in Florence, my dear friend, for Venice and Rome have absorbed my time, and, as you know, happiness occupies a large part of life; so far, we have neither of us dropped from its first level. I am a little fatigued; for when one has a soul not easy to *bluser*, the constant succession of enjoyments naturally causes lassitude.

Our friend has had magnificent triumphs at the Scala and the Fenice, and now at the San Carlo. Three Italian operas in two years! You cannot say that love

has made him idle. We have been warmly received everywhere, — though I myself would have preferred solitude and silence. Surely that is the only suitable manner of life for women who have placed themselves in direct opposition to society? I expected such a life; but love, my dear friend, is a more exacting master than marriage, — however, it is sweet to obey him; though I did not think I should have to see the world again, even by snatches, and the attentions I receive are so many stabs. I am no longer on a footing of equality with the highest rank of women; and the more attentions are paid to me, the more my inferiority is made apparent.

Gennaro could not comprehend this sensitiveness; but he has been so happy that it would ill become me not to have sacrificed my petty vanity to that great and noble thing, — the life of an artist. We women live by love, whereas men live by love and action; otherwise they would not be men. Still, there are great disadvantages for a woman in the position in which I have put myself. You have escaped them; you continue to be a person in the eyes of the world, which has no rights over you; you have your own free will, and I have lost mine. I am speaking now of the things of the heart, not those of social life, which I have utterly renounced. You can be coquettish and self-willed, and have all the graces of a woman who loves, a woman who can give or refuse her love as she pleases; you have kept the right to have caprices, in the interests even of your love. In short, to-day you still possess your right of feeling, while I, I have no longer any liberty of heart, which I think precious to exer-

cise in love, even though the love itself may be eternal. I have no right now to that privilege of quarrelling in jest to which so many women cling, and justly; for is it not the plummet line with which to sound the hearts of men? I have no threat at my command. I must draw my power henceforth from obedience, from unlimited gentleness; I must make myself imposing by the greatness of my love. I would rather die than leave Gennaro, and my pardon lies in the sanctity of my love. Between social dignity and my petty personal dignity, I did right not to hesitate. If at times I have a few melancholy feelings, like clouds that pass through a clear blue sky, and to which all women like to yield themselves, I keep silence about them; they might seem like regrets. Ah me! I have so fully understood the obligations of my position that I have armed myself with the utmost indulgence; but so far, Gennaro has not alarmed my susceptible jealousy. I don't as yet see where that dear great genius may fail.

Dear angel, I am like those pious souls who argue with their God, for are not you my Providence? do I not owe my happiness to you? You must never doubt, therefore, that you are constantly in my thoughts.

I have seen Italy at last; seen it as you saw it, and as it ought to be seen, — lighted to our souls by love, as it is by its own bright sun and its masterpieces. I pity those who, being moved to adoration at every step, have no hand to press, no heart in which to shed the exuberance of emotions which calm themselves when shared. These two years have been to me a lifetime, in which my memory has stored rich harvests.

Have you made plans, as I do, to stay forever at Chiavari, to buy a palazzo in Venice, a summer-house at Sorrento, a villa in Florence? All loving women dread society; but I, who am cast forever outside of it, ought I not to bury myself in some beautiful landscape, on flowery slopes, facing the sea, or in a valley that equals a sea, like that of Fiesole?

But alas! we are only poor artists, and want of money is bringing these two bohemians back to Paris. Gennaro does not want me to feel that I have lost my luxury, and he wishes to put his new work, a grand opera, into rehearsal at once. You will understand, of course, my dearest, that I cannot set foot in Paris. I could not, I would not, even if it costs me my love, meet one of those glances of women, or of men, which would make me think of murder or suicide. Yes, I could hack in pieces whoever insulted me with pity; like Châteauneuf, who, in the time of Henri III., I think, rode his horse at the Provost of Paris for a wrong of that kind, and trampled him under hoof.

I write, therefore, to say that I shall soon pay you a visit at Les Touches. I want to stay there, in that Chartreuse, while awaiting the success of our Gennaro's opera. You see that I am bold with my benefactress, my sister; but I prove, at any rate, that the greatest of obligations laid upon me has not led me, as it does so many people, to ingratitude. You have told me so much of the difficulties of the land journey that I shall go to Croisic by water. This idea came to me on finding that there is a little Danish vessel now here, laden with marble, which is to touch at Croisic for a cargo of salt on its way back to the Bal-

tic. I shall thus escape the fatigue and the cost of the land journey. Dear Félicité, you are the only person with whom I could be alone without Conti. Will it not be some pleasure to have a woman with you who understands your heart as fully as you do hers?

Adieu, *à bientôt*. The wind is favorable, and I set sail, wafting you a kiss.

BÉATRIX.

“Ah! she loves, too!” thought Calyste, folding the letter sadly.

That sadness flowed to the heart of the mother as if some gleam had lighted up a gulf to her. The baron had gone out; Fanny went to the door of the tower and pushed the bolt, then she returned, and leaned upon the back of her boy’s chair, like the sister of Dido in Guerin’s picture, and said, —

“What is it, my Calyste? what makes you so sad? You promised to explain to me these visits to Les Touches; I am to bless its mistress, — at least, you said so.”

“Yes, indeed you will, dear mother,” he replied. “She has shown me the insufficiency of my education at an epoch when the nobles ought to possess a personal value in order to give life to their rank. I was as far from the age we live in as Guérande is from Paris. She has been, as it were, the mother of my intellect.”

“I cannot bless her for that,” said the baroness, with tears in her eyes.

“Mamma!” cried Calyste, on whose forehead those hot tears fell, two pearls of sorrowful motherhood,

“mamma, don’t weep! Just now, when I wanted to do her a service, and search the country round, she said, ‘It will make your mother so uneasy.’”

“Did she say that? Then I can forgive her many things,” replied Fanny.

“Félicité thinks only of my good,” continued Calyste. “She often checks the lively, venturesome language of artists so as not to shake in me a faith which is, though she knows it not, unshakable. She has told me of the life in Paris of several young men of the highest nobility coming from their provinces, as I might do,—leaving families without fortune, but obtaining in Paris, by the power of their will and their intellect, a great career. I can do what the Baron de Rastignac, now a minister of State, has done. Félicité has taught me; I read with her; she gives me lessons on the piano; she is teaching me Italian; she has initiated me into a thousand social secrets, about which no one in Guérande knows anything at all. She could not give me the treasures of her love, but she has given me those of her vast intellect, her mind, her genius. She does not want to be a pleasure, but a light to me; she lessens not one of my faiths; she herself has faith in the nobility, she loves Brittany, she —”

“She has changed our Calyste,” said his blind old aunt, interrupting him. “I do not understand one word he has been saying. You have a solid roof over your head, my good nephew; you have parents and relations who adore you, and faithful servants; you can marry some good little Breton girl, religious and accomplished, who will make you happy. Reserve

your ambitions for your eldest son, who may be four times as rich as you, if you choose to live tranquilly, thriftily, in obscurity,— but in the peace of God,— in order to release the burdens on your estate. It is all as simple as a Breton heart. You will be, not so rapidly perhaps, but more solidly, a rich nobleman.”

“Your aunt is right, my darling; she plans for your happiness with as much anxiety as I do myself. If I do not succeed in marrying you to my niece, Margaret, the daughter of your uncle, Lord Fitzwilliam, it is almost certain that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will leave her fortune to whichever of her nieces you may choose.”

“And besides, there’s a little gold to be found here,” added the old aunt in a low voice, with a mysterious glance about her.

“Marry! at my age!” he said, casting on his mother one of those looks which melt the arguments of mothers. “Am I to live without my beautiful fond loves? Must I never tremble or throb or fear or gasp, or lie beneath implacable looks and soften them? Am I never to know beauty in its freedom, the fantasy of the soul, the clouds that course through the azure of happiness, which the breath of pleasure dissipates? Ah! shall I never wander in those sweet by-paths moist with dew; never stand beneath the drenching of a gutter and not know it rains, like those lovers seen by Diderot; never take, like the Duc de Lorraine, a live coal in my hand? Are there no silken ladders for me, no rotten trellises to cling to and not fall? Shall I know nothing of woman but conjugal submission; nothing of love but the flame of its lamp-wick?”

Are my longings to be satisfied before they are roused? Must I live out my days deprived of that madness of the heart that makes a man and his power? Would you make me a married monk? No! I have eaten of the fruit of Parisian civilization. Do you not see that you have, by the ignorant morals of this family, prepared the fire that consumes me, that *will* consume me utterly, unless I can adore the divineness I see everywhere, — in those sands gleaming in the sun, in the green foliage, in all the women, beautiful, noble, elegant, pictured in the books and in the poems I have read with Camille? Alas! there is but one such woman in Guérande, and it is you, my mother! The birds of my beautiful dream, they come from Paris, they fly from the pages of Scott, of Byron, — Parisina, Effie, Minna! yes, and that royal duchess, whom I saw on the moors among the furze and the ferns, whose very aspect sent the blood to my heart.”

The baroness saw these thoughts flaming in the eyes of her son, clearer, more beautiful, more living than art can tell to those who read them. She grasped them rapidly, flung to her as they were in glances like arrows from an upset quiver. Without having read Beaumarchais, she felt, as other women would have felt, that it would be a crime to marry Calyste.

“Oh! my child!” she said, taking him in her arms, and kissing the beautiful hair that was still hers, “marry whom you will, and when you will, but be happy! My part in life is not to hamper you.”

Mariotte came to lay the table. Gasselin was out exercising Calyste’s horse, which the youth had not mounted for two months. The three women, mother,

aunt, and Mariotte, shared in the tender feminine williness, which taught them to make much of Calyste when he dined at home. Breton plainness fought against Parisian luxury, now brought to the very doors of Guérande. Mariotte endeavored to wean her young master from the accomplished service of Camille Maupin's kitchen, just as his mother and aunt strove to hold him in the net of their tenderness and render all comparison impossible.

"There's a salmon-trout for dinner, Monsieur Calyste, and snipe, and pancakes such as I know you can't get anywhere but here," said Mariotte, with a sly, triumphant look as she smoothed the cloth, a cascade of snow.

After dinner, when the old aunt had taken up her knitting, and the rector and Monsieur du Halga had arrived, allured by their precious *mouche*, Calyste went back to Les Touches on the pretext of returning the letter.

Claude Vignon and Félicité were still at table. The great critic was something of a gourmand, and Félicité pampered the vice, knowing how indispensable a woman makes herself by such compliance. The dinner-table presented that rich and brilliant aspect which modern luxury, aided by the perfecting of handicrafts, now gives to its service. The poor and noble house of Gnénic little knew with what an adversary it was endeavoring to compete, or what amount of fortune was necessary to enter the lists against the silver-ware, the delicate porcelains, the beautiful linen, the silver-gilt service brought from Paris by Mademoiselle des Touches, and the science of her cook. Calyste

declined the liqueurs contained in one of those superb cases of precious woods, which are something like tabernacles.

"Here 's the letter," he said, with innocent ostentation, looking at Claude, who was slowly sipping a glass of *liqueur-des-îles*.

"Well, what did you think of it?" asked Mademoiselle des Touches, throwing the letter across the table to Vignon, who began to read it, taking up and putting down at intervals his little glass.

"I thought — well, that Parisian women were very fortunate to have men of genius to adore who adore them."

"Ah! you are still in your village," said Félicité, laughing. "What! you did not see that she loves him less, and —"

"That is evident," said Claude Vignon, who had only read the first page. "Do people reason on their situation when they really love; are they as shrewd as the marquise, as observing, as discriminating? Your dear Béatrix is held to Conti now by pride only; she is condemned to love him *quand même*."

"Poor woman!" said Camille.

Calyste's eyes were fixed on the table; he saw nothing about him. The beautiful woman in the fanciful dress described that morning by Félicité appeared to him crowned with light; she smiled to him, she waved her fan; the other hand, issuing from its ruffle of lace, fell white and pure on the heavy folds of her crimson velvet robe.

"She is just the thing for you," said Claude Vignon, smiling sardonically at Calyste.

The young man was deeply wounded by the words, and by the manner in which they were said.

“Don’t put such ideas into Calyste’s mind; you don’t know how dangerous such jokes may prove to be,” said Mademoiselle des Touches, hastily. “I know Béatrix, and there is something too grandiose in her nature to allow her to change. Besides, Conti will be here.”

“Ha!” said Claude Vignon, satirically, “a slight touch of jealousy, hey?”

“Can you really think so?” said Camille, haughtily.

“You are more perspicacious than a mother,” replied Claude Vignon, still sarcastically.

“But it would be impossible,” said Camille, looking at Calyste.

“They are very well matched,” remarked Vignon. “She is ten years older than he; and it is he who appears to be the girl —”

“A girl, monsieur,” said Calyste, waking from his reverie, “who has been twice under fire in La Vendée! If the Cause had had twenty thousand more such girls —”

“I was giving you some well-deserved praise, and that is easier than to give you a beard,” remarked Vignon.

“I have a sword for those who wear their beards too long,” cried Calyste.

“And I am very good at an epigram,” said the other, smiling. “We are Frenchmen; the affair can easily be arranged.”

Mademoiselle des Touches cast a supplicating look on Calyste, which calmed him instantly.

“Why,” said Félicité, as if to break up the discussion, “do young men like my Calyste, begin by loving women of a certain age?”

“I don’t know any sentiment more artless or more generous,” replied Vignon. “It is the natural consequence of the adorable qualities of youth. Besides, how would old women end if it were not for such love? You are young and beautiful, and will be for twenty years to come, so I can speak of this matter before you,” he added, with a keen look at Mademoiselle des Touches. “In the first place the semi-dowagers, to whom young men pay their first court, know much better how to make love than younger women. An adolescent youth is too like a young woman himself for a young woman to please him. Such a passion trenches on the fable of Narcissus. Besides that feeling of repugnance, there is, as I think, a mutual sense of inexperience which separates them. The reason why the hearts of young women are only understood by mature men, who conceal their cleverness under a passion real or feigned, is precisely the same (allowing for the difference of minds) as that which renders a woman of a certain age more adroit in attracting youth. A young man feels that he is sure to succeed with her, and the vanities of the woman are flattered by his suit. Besides, isn’t it natural for youth to fling itself on fruits? The autumn of a woman’s life offers many that are very toothsome, — those looks, for instance, bold, and yet reserved, bathed with the last rays of love, so warm, so sweet; that all-wise elegance of speech, those magnificent shoulders, so nobly developed, the full and undulating outline, the

dimpled hands, the hair so well arranged, so cared for, that charming nape of the neck, where all the resources of art are displayed to exhibit the contrast between the hair and the flesh-tones, and to set in full relief the exuberance of life and love. Brunettes themselves are fair at such times, with the amber colors of maturity. Besides, such women reveal in their smiles and display in their words a knowledge of the world; they know how to converse; they can call up the whole of social life to make a lover laugh; their dignity and their pride are stupendous; or, in other moods, they can utter despairing cries which touch his soul, farcivells of love which they take care to render useless, and only make to intensify his passion. Their devotions are absolute; they listen to us; they love us; they catch, they cling to love as a man condemned to death clings to the veriest trifles of existence, — in short, love, absolute love, is known only through them. I think such women can never be forgotten by a man, any more than he can forget what is grand and sublime. A young woman has a thousand distractions; these women have none. No longer have they self-love, pettiness, or vanity; their love — it is the Loire at its mouth, it is vast, it is swelled by all the illusions, all the affluents of life, and this is why — but my muse is dumb," he added, observing the ecstatic attitude of *Mademoiselle des Touches*, who was pressing *Calyste's* hand with all her strength, perhaps to thank him for having been the occasion of such a moment, of such an eulogy, so lofty that she did not see the trap that it laid for her.

During the rest of the evening *Claude Vignon* and

Félicité sparkled with wit and happy sayings; they told anecdotes, and described Parisian life to Calyste, who was charmed with Claude, for mind has immense seductions for persons who are all heart.

“I should n’t be surprised to see the Marquise de Rochefide and Conti, who, of course, will accompany her, at the landing-place to-morrow,” said Claude Vignon, as the evening ended. “When I was at Croisic this afternoon, the fishermen were saying that they had seen a little vessel, Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian, in the offing.”

This speech brought a flush to the cheeks of the impassible Camille.

Again Madame du Guénic sat up till one o’clock that night, waiting for her son, unable to imagine why he should stay so late if Mademoiselle des Touches did not love him.

“He must be in their way,” said this adorable mother. “What were you talking about?” she asked, when at last he came in.

“Oh, mother, I have never before spent such a delightful evening. Genius is a great, a sublime thing! Why did n’t you give me genius? With genius we can make our lives, we can choose among all women the woman to love, and she must be ours.”

“How handsome you are, my Calyste!”

“Claude Vignon is handsome. Men of genius have luminous foreheads and eyes, through which the lightnings flash — but I, alas! I know nothing — only to love.”

“They say that suffices, my angel,” she said, kissing him on the forehead.

“Do you believe it?”

“They say so, but I have never known it.”

Calyste kissed his mother’s hand as if it was a sacred thing.

“I will love you for all those that would have adored you,” he said.

“Dear child! perhaps it is a little bit your duty to do so, for you inherit my nature. But, Calyste, do not be unwise, imprudent; try to love only noble women, if love you must.”

IX.

A FIRST MEETING.

WHAT young man full of abounding but restrained life and emotion would not have had the glorious idea of going to Croisic to see Madame de Rochefide land, and examine her incognito? Calyste greatly surprised his father and mother by going off in the morning without waiting for the mid-day breakfast. Heaven knows with what agility the young Breton's feet sped along. Some unknown vigor seemed lent to him; he walked on air, gliding along by the walls of Les Touches that he might not be seen from the house. The adorable boy was ashamed of his ardor, and afraid of being laughed at; Félicité and Vignon were so perspicacious! besides, in such cases young fellows fancy that their foreheads are transparent.

He reached the shore, strengthened by a stone embankment, at the foot of which is a house where travellers can take shelter in storms of wind or rain. It is not always possible to cross the little arm of the sea which separates the landing-place of Guérande from Croisic; the weather may be bad, or the boats not ready; and during this time of waiting, it is necessary to put not only the passengers but their horses, donkeys, baggage, and merchandise under cover.

Calyste presently saw two boats coming over from

Croisic, laden with baggage, — trunks, packages, bags, and chests, — the shape and appearance of which proved to a native of these parts that such extraordinary articles must belong to travellers of distinction. In one of the boats was a young woman in a straw bonnet with a green veil, accompanied by a man. This boat was the first to arrive. Calyste trembled until on closer view he saw they were a maid and a man-servant.

“Are you going over to Croisic, Monsieur Calyste?” said one of the boatmen; to whom he replied with a shake of the head, annoyed at being called by his name.

He was captivated by the sight of a chest covered with tarred cloth on which were painted the words, *MME. LA MARQUISE DE ROCHEFIDE*. The name shone before him like a talisman; he fancied there was something fateful in it. He knew in some mysterious way, which he could not doubt, that he should love that woman. Why? In the burning desert of his new and infinite desires, still vague and without an object, his fancy fastened with all its strength on the first woman that presented herself. Béatrix necessarily inherited the love which Camille had rejected.

Calyste watched the landing of the luggage, casting from time to time a glance at Croisic, from which he hoped to see another boat put out to cross to the little promontory, and show him Béatrix, already to his thoughts what Beatrice was to Dante, a marble statue on which to hang his garlands and his flowers. He stood with arms folded, lost in meditation. Here is a fact worthy of remark, which, nevertheless, has never been remarked: we often subject ourselves to sentiments by our own volition, — deliberately bind our

selves, and create our own fate; chance has not as much to do with it as we believe.

“I don’t see any horses,” said the maid sitting on a trunk.

“And I don’t see any road,” said the footman.

“Horses have been here, though,” replied the woman, pointing to the proofs of their presence. “Monsieur,” she said, addressing Calyste, “is this really the way to Guérande?”

“Yes,” he replied, “are you expecting some one to meet you?”

“We were told that they would fetch us from Les Touches. If they don’t come,” she added to the footman, “I don’t know how Madame la marquise will manage to dress for dinner. You had better go and find Mademoiselle des Touches. Oh! what a land of savages!”

Calyste had a vague idea of having blundered.

“Is your mistress going to Les Touches?” he inquired.

“She is there; Mademoiselle came for her this morning at seven o’clock. Ah! here come the horses.”

Calyste started toward Guérande with the lightness and agility of a chamois, doubling like a hare that he might not return upon his tracks or meet any of the servants of Les Touches. He did, however, meet two of them on the narrow causeway of the marsh along which he went.

“Shall I go in, or shall I not?” he thought when the pines of Les Touches came in sight. He was afraid; and continued his way rather sulkily to

Guérande, where he finished his excursion on the mall and continued his reflections.

“She has no idea of my agitation,” he said to himself.

His capricious thoughts were so many grapnels which fastened his heart to the marquise. He had known none of these mysterious terrors and joys in his intercourse with Camille. Such vague emotions rise like poems in the untutored soul. Warmed by the first fires of imagination, souls like his have been known to pass through all phases of preparation and to reach in silence and solitude the very heights of love, without having met the object of so many efforts.

Presently Calyste saw, coming toward him, the Chevalier du Halga and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who were walking together on the mall. He heard them say his name, and he slipped aside out of sight, but not out of hearing. The chevalier and the old maid, believing themselves alone, were talking aloud.

“If Charlotte de Kergarouët comes,” said the chevalier, “keep her four or five months. How can you expect her to coquette with Calyste? She is never here long enough to undertake it. Whereas, if they see each other every day, those two children will fall in love, and you can marry them next winter. If you say two words about it to Charlotte she’ll say four to Calyste, and a girl of sixteen can certainly carry off the prize from a woman of forty.”

Here the old people turned to retrace their steps and Calyste heard no more. But remembering what his mother had told him, he saw Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël’s intention, and, in the mood in which he then was, nothing could have been more fatal. The mere idea of a

girl thus imposed upon him sent him with greater ardor into his imaginary love. He had never had a fancy for Charlotte de Kergarouët, and he now felt repugnance at the very thought of her. Calyste was quite unaffected by questions of fortune; from infancy he had accustomed his life to the poverty and the restricted means of his father's house. A young man brought up as he had been, and now partially emancipated, was likely to consider sentiments only, and all his sentiments, all his thought now belonged to the marquise. In presence of the portrait which Camille had drawn for him of her friend, what was that little Charlotte? the companion of his childhood, whom he thought of as a sister.

He did not go home till five in the afternoon. As he entered the hall his mother gave him, with a rather sad smile, the following letter from Mademoiselle des Touches: —

MY DEAR CALYTE, — The beautiful marquise has come; we count on you to help us celebrate her arrival. Claude, always sarcastic, declares that you will play Bice and that she will be Dante. It is for our honor as Bretons, and yours as a du Guénic to welcome a Casteran. Come soon.

Your friend,

CAMILLE MAUPIN.

Come as you are, without ceremony; otherwise you will put us to the blush.

Calyste gave the letter to his mother and departed.

“Who are the Casterans?” said Fanny to the baron.

“An old Norman family, allied to William the Con-

queror," he replied. "They bear on a shield tiercé fessed azure, gules and sable, a horse rearing argent, shod with gold. That beautiful creature for whom the Gars was killed at Fougères in 1800 was the daughter of a Casteran who made herself a nun, and became an abbess after the Duc de Verneuil deserted her."

"And the Rochefides?"

"I don't know that name. I should have to see their blazon," he replied.

The baroness was somewhat reassured on hearing that the Marquise de Rochefide was born of a noble family, but she felt that her son was now exposed to new seductions.

Calyste as he walked along felt all sorts of violent and yet soft inward movements; his throat was tight, his heart swelled, his brain was full, a fever possessed him. He tried to walk slowly, but some superior power hurried him. This impetuosity of the several senses excited by vague expectation is known to all young men. A subtile fire flames within their breasts and darts outwardly about them, like the rays of a nimbus around the heads of divine personages in works of religious art; through it they see all Nature glorious, and woman radiant. Are they not then like those haloed saints, full of faith, hope, ardor, purity?

The young Breton found the company assembled in the little salon of Camille's suite of rooms. It was then about six o'clock; the sun, in setting, cast through the windows its ruddy light chequered by the trees; the air was still; twilight, beloved of women, was spreading through the room.

"Here comes the future deputy of Brittany," said

Camille Maupin, smiling, as Calyste raised the tapestry portière, — “punctual as a king.”

“You recognized his step just now,” said Claude to Félicité in a low voice.

Calyste bowed low to the marquise, who returned the salutation with an inclination of her head; he did not look at her; but he took the hand Claude Vignon held out to him and pressed it.

“This is the celebrated man of whom we have talked so much, Gennaro Conti,” said Camille, not replying to Claude Vignon’s remark.

She presented to Calyste a man of medium height, thin and slender, with chestnut hair, eyes that were almost red, and a white skin, freckled here and there, whose head was so precisely the well-known head of Lord Byron (though rather better carried on his shoulders) that description is superfluous. Conti was rather proud of this resemblance.

“I am fortunate,” he said, “to meet Monsieur du Guénic during the one day that I spend at Les Touches.”

“It was for me to say that to you,” replied Calyste, with a certain ease.

“He is handsome as an angel,” said the marquise in an under tone to Félicité.

Standing between the sofa and the two ladies, Calyste heard the words confusedly. He seated himself in an arm-chair and looked furtively toward the marquise. In the soft half-light he saw, reclining on a divan, as if a sculptor had placed it there, a white and serpentine shape which thrilled him. Without being aware of it, Félicité had done her friend a service;

the marquise was much superior to the unflattered portrait Camille had drawn of her the night before. Was it to do honor to the guest that Béatrix had wound into her hair those tufts of blue-bells that gave value to the pale tints of her *crêped* curls, so arranged as to fall around her face and play upon the cheeks? The circle of her eyes, which showed fatigue, was of the purest mother-of-pearl, her skin was as dazzling as the eyes, and beneath its whiteness, delicate as the satiny lining of an egg, life abounded in the beautiful blue veins. The delicacy of the features was extreme; the forehead seemed diaphanous. The head, so sweet and fragrant, admirably joined to a long neck of exquisite moulding, lent itself to many and most diverse expressions. The waist, which could be spanned by the hands, had a charming willowy ease; the bare shoulders sparkled in the twilight like a white camellia. The throat, visible to the eye though covered with a transparent fichu, allowed the graceful outlines of the bosom to be seen with charming roguishness. A gown of white muslin, strewn with blue flowers, made with very large sleeves, a pointed body and no belt, shoes with strings crossed on the instep over Scotch thread stockings, showed a charming knowledge of the art of dress. Ear-rings of silver filagree, miracles of Genoese jewelry, destined no doubt to become the fashion, were in perfect harmony with the delightful flow of the soft curls starred with blue-bells.

Calyste's eager eye took in these beauties at a glance, and carved them on his soul. The fair Béatrix and the dark Félicité might have sat for those contrasting portraits in "keepsakes" which English

designers and engravers seek so persistently. Here were the force and the feebleness of womanhood in full development, a perfect antithesis. These two women could never be rivals; each had her own empire. Here was the delicate campanula, or the lily, beside the scarlet poppy; a turquoise near a ruby. In a moment, as it were, — at first sight, as the saying is, — Calyste was seized with a love which crowned the secret work of his hopes, his fears, his uncertainties. Mademoiselle des Touches had awakened his nature; Béatrix inflamed both his heart and thoughts. The young Breton suddenly felt within him a power to conquer all things, and yield to nothing that stood in his way. He looked at Conti with an envious, gloomy, savage rivalry he had never felt for Claude Vignon. He employed all his strength to control himself; but the inward tempest went down as soon as the eyes of Béatrix turned to him, and her soft voice sounded in his ear. Dinner was announced.

“Calyste, give your arm to the marquise,” said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Conti with her right hand, and Claude Vignon with her left, and drawing back to let the marquise pass.

The descent of that ancient staircase was to Calyste like the moment of going into battle for the first time. His heart failed him, he had nothing to say; a slight sweat pearly upon his forehead and wet his back; his arm trembled so much that as they reached the lowest step the marquise said to him: “Is anything the matter?”

“Oh!” he replied, in a muffled tone, “I have never seen any woman so beautiful as you, except my mother, and I am not master of my emotions.”

“But you have Camille Maupin before your eyes.”

“Ah! what a difference!” said Calyste, ingenuously.

“Calyste,” whispered Félicité, who was just behind him, “did I not tell you that you would forget me as if I had never existed? Sit there,” she said aloud, “beside the marquise, on her right, and you, Claude, on her left. As for you, Gennaro, I retain you by me; we will keep a mutual eye on their coquetries.”

The peculiar accent which Camille gave to the last word struck Claude Vignon’s ear, and he cast that sly but half-abstracted look upon Camille which always denoted in him the closest observation. He never ceased to examine Mademoiselle des Touches throughout the dinner.

“Coquetries!” replied the marquise, taking off her gloves, and showing her beautiful hands; “the opportunity is good, with a poet,” and she motioned to Claude, “on one side, and poesy the other.”

At these words Conti turned and gave Calyste a look that was full of flattery.

By artificial light, Béatrix seemed more beautiful than before. The white gleam of the candles laid a satiny lustre on her forehead, lighted the spangles of her eyes, and ran through her swaying curls, touching them here and there into gold. She threw back the thin gauze scarf she was wearing and disclosed her neck. Calyste then saw its beautiful nape, white as milk, and hollowed near the head, until its lines were lost toward the shoulders with soft and flowing symmetry. This neck, so dissimilar to that of Camille, was the sign of a totally different character in Béatrix.

Calyste found much trouble in pretending to eat; nervous motions within him deprived him of appetite. Like other young men, his nature was in the throes and convulsions which precede love, and carve it indelibly on the soul. At his age, the ardor of the heart, restrained by moral ardor, leads to an inward conflict, which explains the long and respectful hesitations, the tender debates, the absence of all calculation, characteristic of young men whose hearts and lives are pure. Studying, though furtively, so as not to attract the notice of Conti; the various details which made the marquise so purely beautiful, Calyste became, before long, oppressed by a sense of her majesty; he felt himself dwarfed by the hauteur of certain of her glances, by the imposing expression of a face that was wholly aristocratic, by a sort of pride which women know how to express in slight motions, turns of the head, and slow gestures, effects less plastic and less studied than we think. The false situation in which Béatrix had placed herself compelled her to watch her own behavior, and to keep herself imposing without being ridiculously so. Women of the great world know how to succeed in this, which proves a fatal reef to vulgar women.

The expression of Félicité's eyes made Béatrix aware of the inward adoration she inspired in the youth beside her, and also that it would be most unworthy on her part to encourage it. She therefore took occasion now and then to give him a few repressive glances, which fell upon his heart like an avalanche of snow. The unfortunate young fellow turned on Félicité a look in which she could read the tears he was

suppressing by superhuman efforts. She asked him in a friendly tone why he was eating nothing. The question piqued him, and he began to force himself to eat and to take part in the conversation.

But whatever he did, Madame de Rochefide paid little attention to him. Mademoiselle des Touches having started the topic of her journey to Italy she related, very wittily, many of its incidents, which made Claude Vignon, Conti, and Félicité laugh.

“ Ah ! ” thought Calyste, “ how far such a woman is from me ! Will she ever deign to notice me ? ”

Mademoiselle des Touches was struck with the expression she now saw on Calyste's face, and tried to console him with a look of sympathy. Claude Vignon intercepted that look. From that moment the great critic expanded into gayety that overflowed in sarcasm. He maintained to Béatrix that love existed only by desire ; that most women deceived themselves in loving ; that they loved for reasons often unknown to men and to themselves ; that they wanted to deceive themselves, and that the best among them were artful.

“ Keep to books, and don't criticise our lives, ” said Camille, glancing at him imperiously.

The dinner ceased to be gay. Claude Vignon's sarcasm had made the two women pensive. Calyste was conscious of pain in the midst of the happiness he found in looking at Béatrix. Conti looked into the eyes of the marquise to guess her thoughts. When dinner was over Mademoiselle des Touches took Calyste's arm, gave the other two men to the marquise, and let them pass before her, that she might be alone with the young Breton for a moment.

“My dear Calyste,” she said, “you are acting in a manner that embarrasses the marquise; she may be delighted with your admiration, but she cannot accept it. Pray control yourself.”

“She was hard to me, she will never care for me,” said Calyste, “and if she does not I shall die.”

“Die! you! My dear Calyste, you are a child. Would you have died for me?”

“You have made yourself my friend,” he answered.

After the talk that follows coffee, Vignon asked Conti to sing something. Mademoiselle des Touches sat down to the piano. Together she and Gennaro sang the *Dunque il mio bene tu mia sarai*, the last duet of Zingarelli’s “Romeo e Giulietta,” one of the most pathetic pages of modern music. The passage *Di tanti palpiti* expresses love in all its grandeur. Calyste, sitting in the same arm-chair in which Félicité had told him the history of the marquise, listened in rapt devotion. Béatrix and Vignon were on either side of the piano. Conti’s sublime voice knew well how to blend with that of Félicité. Both had often sung this piece; they knew its resources, and they put their whole marvellous gift into bringing them out. The music was at this moment what its creator intended, a poem of divine melancholy, the farewell of two swans to life. When it was over, all present were under the influence of feelings such as cannot express themselves by vulgar applause.

“Ah! music is the first of arts!” exclaimed the marquise.

“Camille thinks youth and beauty the first of poesies,” said Claude Vignon.

Mademoiselle des Touches looked at Claude with

vague uneasiness. Béatrix, not seeing Calyste, turned her head as if to know what effect the music had produced upon him, less by way of interest in him than for the gratification of Conti; she saw a white face bathed in tears. At the sight, and as if some sudden pain had seized her, she turned back quickly and looked at Gennaro. Not only had Music arisen before the eyes of Calyste, touching him with her divine wand until he stood in presence of Creation from which she rent the veil, but he was dumfounded by Conti's genius. In spite of what Camille had told him of the musician's character, he now believed in the beauty of the soul, in the heart that expressed such love. How could he, Calyste, rival such an artist? What woman would ever cease to adore such genius? That voice entered the soul like another soul. The poor lad was overwhelmed by its poesy, and his own despair. He felt himself of no account. This ingenuous admission of his nothingness could be read upon his face mingled with his admiration. He did not observe the gesture with which Béatrix, attracted to Calyste by the contagion of a true feeling, called Félicité's attention to him.

“Oh! the adorable heart!” cried Camille. “Conti, you will never obtain applause of one-half the value of that child's homage. Let us sing this trio. Béatrix, my dear, come.”

When the marquise, Camille, and Conti had arranged themselves at the piano, Calyste rose softly, without attracting their attention, and flung himself on one of the sofas in the bedroom, the door of which stood open, where he sat with his head in his hands, plunged in meditation.

X.

DRAMA.

“WHAT is it, my child?” said Claude Vignon, who had slipped silently into the bedroom after Calyste, and now took him by the hand. “You love; you think you are disdained; but it is not so. The field will be free to you in a few days and you will reign — beloved by more than one.”

“Loved!” cried Calyste, springing up, and beckoning Claude into the library, “Who loves me here?”

“Camille,” replied Claude.

“Camille loves me? And you! — what of you?”

“I?” answered Claude, “I —” He stopped; sat down on a sofa and rested his head with weary sadness on a cushion. “I am tired of life, but I have not the courage to quit it,” he went on, after a short silence. “I wish I were mistaken in what I have just told you; but for the last few days more than one vivid light has come into my mind. I did not wander about the marshes for my pleasure; no, upon my soul I did not! The bitterness of my words when I returned and found you with Camille were the result of wounded feeling. I intend to have an explanation with her soon. Two minds as clear-sighted as hers and mine cannot deceive each other. Between two such professional duellists the combat cannot last long. Therefore I may as well

tell you now that I shall leave Les Touches ; yes, to-morrow perhaps, with Conti. After we are gone strange things will happen here. I shall regret not witnessing conflicts of passion of a kind so rare in France, and so dramatic. You are very young to enter such dangerous lists ; you interest me ; were it not for the profound disgust I feel for women, I would stay and help you play this game. It is difficult ; you may lose it ; you have to do with two extraordinary women, and you feel too much for one to use the other judiciously. Béatrix is dogged by nature ; Camille has grandeur. Probably you will be wrecked between those reefs, drawn upon them by the waves of passion. Beware ! ”

Calyste's stupefaction on hearing these words enabled Claude to say them without interruption and leave the young Breton, who remained like a traveller among the Alps to whom a guide has shown the depth of some abyss by flinging a stone into it. To hear from the lips of Claude himself that Camille loved him, at the very moment when he felt that he loved Béatrix for life, was a weight too heavy for his untried soul to bear. Goaded by an immense regret which now filled all the past, overwhelmed with a sight of his position between Béatrix whom he loved and Camille whom he had ceased to love, the poor boy sat despairing and undecided, lost in thought. He sought in vain for the reasons which had made Félicité reject his love and bring Claude Vignon from Paris to oppose it. Every now and then the voice of Béatrix came fresh and pure to his ears from the little salon ; a savage desire to rush in and carry her off seized him at such

moments. What would become of him? What must he do? Could he come to Les Touches? If Camille loved him how could he come there to adore Béatrix? He saw no solution to these difficulties.

Insensibly to him silence now reigned in the house; he heard, but without noticing, the opening and shutting of doors. Then suddenly midnight sounded on the clock of the adjoining bedroom, and the voices of Claude and Camille roused him fully from his torpid contemplation of the future. Before he could rise and show himself, he heard the following terrible words in the voice of Claude Vignon.

“You came to Paris last year desperately in love with Calyste,” Claude was saying to Félicité, “but you were horrified at the thought of the consequences of such a passion at your age; it would lead you to a gulf, to hell, to suicide perhaps. Love cannot exist unless it thinks itself eternal, and you saw not far before you a horrible parting; old age you knew would end the glorious poem soon. You thought of “Adolphe,” that dreadful finale of the loves of Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant, who, however, were nearer of an age than you and Calyste. Then you took me, as soldiers use fascines to build entrenchments between the enemy and themselves. You brought me to Les Touches to mask your real feelings and leave you safe to follow your own secret adoration. The scheme was grand and ignoble both; but to carry it out you should have chosen either a common man or one so preoccupied by noble thoughts that you could easily deceive him. You thought me simple and easy to mislead as a man of genius. I am not a man

of genius, I am a man of talent, and as such I have divined you. When I made that eulogy yesterday on women of your age, explaining to you why Calyste had loved you, do you suppose I took to myself your ravished, fascinated, dazzling glance? Had I not read into your soul? The eyes were turned on me, but the heart was throbbing for Calyste. You have never been loved, my poor Maupin, and you never will be after rejecting the beautiful fruit which chance has offered to you at the portals of that hell of woman, the lock of which is the numeral 50!"

"Why has love fled me?" she said in a low voice. "Tell me, you who know all."

"Because you are not lovable," he answered. "You do not bend to love; love must bend to you. You may perhaps have yielded to some follies of youth, but there was no youth in your heart; your mind has too much depth; you have never been naïve and artless, and you cannot begin to be so now. Your charm comes from mystery; it is abstract, not active. Your strength repulses men of strength who fear a struggle. Your power may please young souls, like that of Calyste, which like to be protected; though, even them it wearies in the long run. You are grand, and you are sublime; bear with the consequence of those two qualities — they fatigue."

"What a sentence!" cried Camille. "Am I not a woman? Do you think me an anomaly?"

"Possibly," said Claude.

"We will see!" said the woman, stung to the quick.

"Farewell, my dear Camille; I leave to-morrow.

I am not angry with you, my dear; I think you the greatest of women, but if I continued to serve you as a screen, or a shield," said Claude, with two significant inflections of his voice, "you would despise me. We can part now without pain or remorse; we have neither happiness to regret nor hopes betrayed. To you, as with some few but rare men of genius, love is not what Nature made it, — an imperious need, to the satisfaction of which she attaches great and passing joys, which die. You see love such as Christianity has created it, — an ideal kingdom, full of noble sentiments, of grand weaknesses, poesies, spiritual sensations, devotions of moral fragrance, entrancing harmonies, placed high above all vulgar coarseness, to which two creatures as one angel fly on the wings of pleasure. This is what I hoped to share; I thought I held in you a key to that door, closed to so many, by which we may advance toward the infinite. You were there already. In this you have misled me. I return to my misery, — to my vast prison of Paris. Such a deception as this, had it come to me earlier in life, would have made me flee from existence; to-day it puts into my soul a disenchantment which will plunge me forever into an awful solitude. I am without the faith which helped the Fathers to people theirs with sacred images. It is to this, my dear Camille, to this that the superiority of our mind has brought us; we may, both of us, sing that dreadful hymn which a poet has put into the mouth of Moses speaking to the Almighty: 'Lord God, Thou hast made me powerful and solitary.'"

At this moment Calyste appeared.

“I ought not to leave you ignorant that I am here,” he said.

Mademoiselle des Touches showed the utmost fear; a sudden flush colored her impassible face with tints of fire. During this strange scene she was more beautiful than at any other moment of her life.

“We thought you gone, Calyste,” said Claude. “But this involuntary indiscretion on both sides will do no harm; perhaps, indeed, you may be more at your ease at Les Touches by knowing Félicité as she is. Her silence shows me I am not mistaken as to the part she meant me to play. As I told you before, she loves you, but it is for yourself, not for herself, — a sentiment that few women are able to conceive and practise; few among them know the voluptuous pleasure of sufferings born of longing, — that is one of the magnificent passions reserved for man. But she is in some sense a man,” he added, sardonically. “Your love for Béatrix will make her suffer and make her happy too.”

Tears were in the eyes of Mademoiselle des Touches, who was unable to look either at the terrible Vignon or the ingenuous Calyste. She was frightened at being understood; she had supposed it impossible for a man, however keen his perception, to perceive a delicacy so self-immolating, a heroism so lofty as her own. Her evident humiliation at this unveiling of her grandeur made Calyste share the emotion of the woman he had held so high, and now beheld so stricken down. He threw himself, from an irresistible impulse, at her feet, and kissed her hands, laying his face, covered with tears, upon them.

"Claude," she said, "do not abandon me, or what will become of me?"

"What have you to fear?" replied the critic. "Calyste has fallen in love at first sight with the marquise; you cannot find a better barrier between you than that. This passion of his is worth more to you than I. Yesterday there might have been some danger for you and for him; to-day you can take a maternal interest in him," he said, with a mocking smile, "and be proud of his triumphs."

Mademoiselle des Touches looked at Calyste, who had raised his head abruptly at these words. Claude Vignon enjoyed, for his sole vengeance, the sight of their confusion.

"You yourself have driven him to Madame de Rochefide," continued Claude, "and he is now under the spell. You have dug your own grave. Had you confided in me, you would have escaped the sufferings that await you."

"Sufferings!" cried Camille Maupin, taking Calyste's head in her hands, and kissing his hair, on which her tears fell plentifully. "No, Calyste; forget what you have heard; I count for nothing in all this."

She rose and stood erect before the two men, subduing both with the lightning of her eyes, from which her soul shone out.

"While Claude was speaking," she said, "I conceived the beauty and the grandeur of love without hope; it is the sentiment that brings us nearest God. Do not love me, Calyste; but I will love you as no woman will!"

It was the cry of a wounded eagle seeking its eyry.

Claude himself knelt down, took Camille's hand, and kissed it.

"Leave us now, Calyste," she said; "it is late, and your mother will be uneasy."

Calyste returned to Guérande with lagging steps, turning again and again, to see the light from the windows of the room in which was Béatrix. He was surprised himself to find how little pity he felt for Camille. But presently he felt once more the agitations of that scene, the tears she had left upon his hair; he suffered with her suffering; he fancied he heard the moans of that noble woman, so beloved, so desired but a few short days before.

When he opened the door of his paternal home, where total silence reigned, he saw his mother through the window, as she sat sewing by the light of the curiously constructed lamp while she awaited him. Tears moistened the lad's eyes as he looked at her.

"What has happened?" cried Fanny, seeing his emotion, which filled her with horrible anxiety.

For all answer, Calyste took his mother in his arms, and kissed her on her cheeks, her forehead and hair, with one of those passionate effusions of feeling that comfort mothers, and fill them with the subtle flames of the life they have given.

"It is you I love, you!" cried Calyste, — "you, who live for me; you, whom I long to render happy!"

"But you are not yourself, my child," said the baroness, looking at him attentively. "What has happened to you?"

"Camille loves me, but I love her no longer," he answered.

The next day, Calyste told Gasselin to watch the road to Saint-Nazaire, and let him know if the carriage of Mademoiselle des Touches passed over it. Gasselin brought word that the carriage had passed.

"How many persons were in it?" asked Calyste.

"Four, — two ladies and two gentlemen."

"Then saddle my horse and my father's."

Gasselin departed.

"Why, nephew, what mischief is in you now?" said his Aunt Zéphirine.

"Let the boy amuse himself, sister," cried the baron. "Yesterday he was dull as an owl; to-day he is gay as a lark."

"Did you tell him that our dear Charlotte was to arrive to-day?" said Zéphirine, turning to her sister-in-law.

"No," replied the baroness.

"I thought perhaps he was going to meet her," said Mademoiselle du Guénic, slyly.

"If Charlotte is to stay three months with her aunt, he will have plenty of opportunities to see her," said his mother.

"Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël wants me to marry Charlotte, to save me from perdition," said Calyste, laughing. "I was on the mall when she and the Chevalier du Halga were talking about it. She can't see that it would be greater perdition for me to marry at my age —"

"It is written above," said the old maid, interrupting Calyste, "that I shall not die tranquil or happy. I wanted to see our family continued, and some, at least, of the estates bought back; but it is not to be.

What can you, my fine nephew, put in the scale against such duties? Is it that actress at Les Touches?"

"What?" said the baron; "how can Mademoiselle des Touches hinder Calyste's marriage, when it becomes necessary for us to make it? I shall go and see her."

"I assure you, father," said Calyste, "that Félicité will never be an obstacle to my marriage."

Gasselin appeared with the horses.

"Where are you going, chevalier?" said his father.

"To Saint-Nazaire."

"Ha, ha! and when is the marriage to be?" said the baron, believing that Calyste was really in a hurry to see Charlotte de Kergarouët. "It is high time I was a grandfather. Spare the horses," he continued, as he went on the portico with Fanny to see Calyste mount; "remember that they have more than thirty miles to go."

Calyste started with a tender farewell to his mother.

"Dear treasure!" she said, as she saw him lower his head to ride through the gateway.

"God keep him!" replied the baron; "for we cannot replace him."

The words made the baroness shudder.

"My nephew does not love Charlotte enough to ride to Saint-Nazaire after her," said the old blind woman to Mariotte, who was clearing the breakfast-table.

"No; but a fine lady, a marquise, has come to Les Touches, and I'll warrant he's after her; that's the way at his age," said Mariotte.

"They 'll kill him," said Mademoiselle du Guénic.

"That won't kill him, mademoiselle; quite the contrary," replied Mariotte, who seemed to be pleased with Calyste's behavior.

The young fellow started at a great pace, until Gasselin asked him if he was trying to catch the boat, which, of course, was not at all his desire. He had no wish to see either Conti or Claude again; but he did expect to be invited to drive back with the ladies, leaving Gasselin to lead his horse. He was gay as a bird, thinking to himself, —

"*She* has just passed here; *her* eyes saw those trees! — What a lovely road!" he said to Gasselin.

"Ah! monsieur, Brittany is the most beautiful country in all the world," replied the Breton. "Where could you find such flowers in the hedges, and nice cool roads that wind about like these?"

"Nowhere, Gasselin."

"*Tiens!* here comes the coach from Nazaire," cried Gasselin presently.

"Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël and her niece will be in it. Let us hide," said Calyste.

"Hide! are you crazy, monsieur? Why, we are on the moor!"

The coach, which was coming up the sandy hill above Saint-Nazaire, was full, and, much to the astonishment of Calyste, there were no signs of Charlotte.

"We had to leave Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, her sister and niece; they are dreadfully worried; but all my seats were engaged by the custom-house," said the conductor to Gasselin.

“I am lost!” thought Calyste; “they will meet me down there.”

When Calyste reached the little esplanade which surrounds the church of Saint-Nazaire, and from which is seen Paimbœuf and the magnificent Mouths of the Loire as they struggle with the sea, he found Camille and the marquise waving their handkerchiefs as a last adieu to two passengers on the deck of the departing steamer. Béatrix was charming as she stood there, her features softened by the shadow of a rice-straw hat, on which were tufts and knots of scarlet ribbon. She wore a muslin gown with a pattern of flowers, and was leaning with one well-gloved hand on a slender parasol. Nothing is finer to the eye than a woman poised on a rock like a statue on its pedestal. Conti could see Calyste from the vessel as he approached Camille.

“I thought,” said the young man, “that you would probably come back alone.”

“You have done right, Calyste,” she replied, pressing his hand.

Béatrix turned round, saw her young lover, and gave him the most imperious look in her repertory. A smile, which the marquise detected on the eloquent lips of Mademoiselle des Touches, made her aware of the vulgarity of such conduct, worthy only of a bourgeoisie. She then said to Calyste, smiling, —

“Are you not guilty of a slight impertinence in supposing that I should bore Camille, if left alone with her?”

“My dear, one man to two widows is none too

much," said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Calyste's arm, and leaving Béatrix to watch the vessel till it disappeared. •

At this moment Calyste heard the approaching voices of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, Charlotte, and Gasselin, who were all talking at once, like so many magpies. The old maid was questioning Gasselin as to what had brought him and his master to Saint-Nazaire; the carriage of Mademoiselle des Touches had already caught her eye. Before the young Breton could get out of sight, Charlotte had seen him.

"Why, there 's Calyste!" she exclaimed eagerly.

"Go and offer them seats in my carriage," said Camille to Calyste; "the maid can sit with the coachman. I saw those ladies lose their places in the mail-coach."

Calyste, who could not help himself, carried the message. As soon as Madame de Kergarouët learned that the offer came from the celebrated Camille Maupin, and that the Marquise de Rochefide was of the party, she was much surprised at the objections raised by her elder sister, who refused positively to profit by what she called the devil's carryall. At Nantes, which boasted of more civilization than Guérande, Camille was read and admired; she was thought to be the muse of Brittany and an honor to the region. The absolution granted to her in Paris by society, by fashion, was there justified by her great fortune and her early successes in Nantes, which claimed the honor of having been, if not her birthplace, at least her cradle. The viscountess,

therefore, eager to see her, dragged her old sister forward, paying no attention to her jeremiads.

“Good-morning, Calyste,” said Charlotte.

“Oh! good-morning, Charlotte,” replied Calyste, not offering his arm.

Both were confused; she by his coldness, he by his cruelty, as they walked up the sort of ravine, which is called in Saint-Nazaire a street, following the two sisters in silence. In a moment the little girl of sixteen saw her castle in Spain, built and furnished with romantic hopes, a heap of ruins. She and Calyste had played together so much in childhood, she was so bound up with him, as it were, that she had quietly supposed her future unassailable; she arrived now, swept along by thoughtless happiness, like a circling bird darting down upon a wheat-field, and lo! she was stopped in her flight, unable to imagine the obstacle.

“What is the matter, Calyste?” she said, taking his hand.

“Nothing,” replied the young man, releasing himself with cruel haste as he remembered the projects of his aunt and her friend.

Tears came into Charlotte’s eyes. She looked at the handsome Calyste without ill-humor; but a first spasm of jealousy seized her, and she felt the dreadful madness of rivalry when she came in sight of the two Parisian women, and suspected the cause of his coldness.

Charlotte de Kergarouët was a girl of ordinary height, and commonplace coloring; she had a little round face, made lively by a pair of black eyes which sparkled with cleverness, abundant brown hair, a

round waist, a flat back, thin arms, and the curt, decided manner of a provincial girl, who did not want to be taken for a little goose. She was the petted child of the family on account of the preference her aunt showed for her. At this moment she was wrapped in a mantle of Scotch merino in large plaids, lined with green silk, which she had worn on the boat. Her travelling-dress, of some common stuff, chastely made with a chemisette body and a pleated collar, was fated to appear, even to her own eyes, horrible in comparison with the fresh toilets of Béatrix and Camille. She was painfully aware of stockings soiled among the rocks as she jumped from the boat, of shabby leather shoes, chosen for the purpose of not spoiling better ones on the journey, — a fixed principle in the manners and customs of provincials.

As for the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, she might stand as the type of a provincial woman. Tall, hard, withered, full of pretensions, which did not show themselves until they were mortified, talking much, and catching, by dint of talking (as one cannons at billiards), a few ideas, which gave her the reputation of wit, endeavoring to humiliate Parisians, whenever she met them, with an assumption of country wisdom and patronage, humbling herself to be exalted and furious at being left upon her knees; fishing, as the English say, for compliments, which she never caught; dressed in clothes that were exaggerated in style, and yet ill cared for; mistaking want of good manners for dignity, and trying to embarrass others by paying no attention to them; refusing what she desired in order to have it offered again, and to seem to yield only to

entreaty; concerned about matters that others have done with, and surprised at not being in the fashion; and finally, unable to get through an hour without reference to Nantes; the tigers of Nantes, matters of social life in Nantes, complaints of Nantes, criticism of Nantes, and taking as personalities the remarks she forced out of absent-minded or wearied listeners.

Her manners, language, and ideas had, more or less, descended to her four daughters. To know Camille Manpin and Madame de Rochefide would be for her a future, and the topic of a hundred conversations. Consequently, she advanced toward the church as if she meant to take it by assault, waving her handkerchief, unfolded for the purpose of displaying the heavy corners of domestic embroidery, and trimmed with flimsy lace. Her gait was tolerably bold and cavalier, which, however, was of no consequence in a woman forty-seven years of age.

“Monsieur le chevalier,” she said to Camille and Béatrix, pointing to Calyste, who was mournfully following with Charlotte, “has conveyed to me your friendly proposal, but we fear — my sister, my daughter, and myself — to inconvenience you.”

“Sister, I shall not put these ladies to inconvenience,” said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, sharply; “I can very well find a horse in Saint-Nazaire to take me home.”

Camille and Béatrix exchanged an oblique glance, which Calyste intercepted, and that glance sufficed to annihilate all the memories of his childhood, all his beliefs in the Kergaronêts and Pen-Hoëls, and to put an end forever to the projects of the three families.

“We can very well put five in the carriage,” replied Mademoiselle des Tonches, on whom Jaqueline turned her back, “even if we were inconvenienced, which cannot be the case, with your slender figures. Besides, I should enjoy the pleasure of doing a little service to Calyste’s friends. Your maid, madame, will find a seat by the coachman, and your luggage, if you have any, can go behind the carriage; I have no footman with me.”

The viscountess was overwhelming in thanks, and complained that her sister Jacqueline had been in such a hurry to see her niece that she would not give her time to come properly in her own carriage with post-horses, though, to be sure, the post-road was not only longer, but more expensive; she herself was obliged to return almost immediately to Nantes, where she had left three other little kittens, who were anxiously awaiting her. Here she put her arm round Charlotte’s neck. Charlotte, in reply, raised her eyes to her mother with the air of a little victim, which gave an impression to onlookers that the viscountess bored her four daughters prodigiously by dragging them on the scene very much as Corporal Trim produces his cap in “*Tristram Shandy*.”

“You are a fortunate mother and — ” began Camille, stopping short as she remembered that Béatrix must have parted from her son when she left her husband’s house.

“Oh, yes!” said the viscountess; “if I have the misfortune of spending my life in the country, and, above all, at Nantes, I have at least the consolation of being adored by my children. Have you children?” she said to Camille.

“I am Mademoiselle des Touches,” replied Camille.
“Madame is the Marquise de Rochefide.”

“Then I must pity you for not knowing the greatest happiness that there is for us poor, simple women — is not that so, madame?” said the viscountess, turning to Béatrix. “But you, mademoiselle, have so many compensations.”

The tears came into Madame de Rochefide’s eyes, and she turned away toward the parapet to hide them. Calyste followed her.

“Madame,” said Camille, in a low voice to the viscountess, “are you not aware that the marquise is separated from her husband? She has not seen her son for two years, and does not know when she will see him.”

“You don’t say so!” said Madame de Kergarouët.
“Poor lady! is she legally separated?”

“No, by mutual consent,” replied Camille.

“Ah, well! I understand that,” said the viscountess boldly.

Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, furious at being thus dragged into the enemy’s camp, had retreated to a short distance with her dear Charlotte. Calyste, after looking about him to make sure that no one could see him, seized the hand of the marquise, kissed it, and left a tear upon it. Béatrix turned round, her tears dried by anger; she was about to utter some terrible word, but it died upon her lips as she saw the grief on the angelic face of the youth, as deeply touched by her present sorrow as she was herself.

“Good heavens, Calyste!” said Camille in his ear, as he returned with Madame de Rochefide, “are you

to have *that* for a mother-in-law, and the little one for a wife?"

"Because her aunt is rich," replied Calyste, sarcastically.

The whole party now moved toward the inn, and the viscountess felt herself obliged to make Camille a speech on the savages of Saint-Nazaire.

"I love Brittany, madame," replied Camille, gravely. "I was born at Guérande."

Calyste could not help admiring Mademoiselle des Touches, who, by the tone of her voice, the tranquillity of her look, and her quiet manner, put him at his ease, in spite of the terrible declarations of the preceding night. She seemed, however, a little fatigued; her eyes were enlarged by dark circles round them, showing that she had not slept; but the brow dominated the inward storm with cold placidity.

"What queens!" he said to Charlotte, calling her attention to the marquise and Camille as he gave the girl his arm, to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's great satisfaction.

"What an idea your mother has had," said the old maid, taking her niece's other arm, "to put herself in the company of that reprobate woman!"

"Oh, aunt, a woman who is the glory of Brittany!"

"The shame, my dear. Mind that you don't fawn upon her in that way."

"Mademoiselle Charlotte is right," said Calyste; "you are not just."

"Oh, you!" replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, "she has bewitched you."

“I regard her,” said Calyste, “with the same friendship that I feel for you.”

“Since when have the du Guénics taken to telling lies?” asked the old maid.

“Since the Pen-Hoëls have grown deaf,” replied Calyste.

“Are not you in love with her?” demanded the old maid.

“I have been, but I am so no longer,” he said.

“Bad boy! then why have you given us such anxiety? I know very well that love is only foolishness; there is nothing solid but marriage,” she remarked, looking at Charlotte.

Charlotte, somewhat reassured, hoped to recover her advantages by recalling the memories of childhood. She leaned affectionately on Calyste’s arm, who resolved in his own mind to have a clear explanation with the little heiress.

“Ah! what fun we shall have at *mouche*, Calyste!” she said; “what good laughs we used to have over it!”

The horses were now put in; Camille placed Madame de Kergaronët and Charlotte on the back seat. Jacqueline having disappeared, she herself, with the marquise, sat forward. Calyste was, of course, obliged to relinquish the pleasure on which he had counted, of driving back with Camille and Béatrix, but he rode beside the carriage all the way; the horses, being tired with the journey, went slowly enough to allow him to keep his eyes on Béatrix.

History must lose the curious conversation that went on between these four persons whom accident had so strangely united in this carriage, for it is im-

possible to report the hundred and more versions which went the round of Nantes on the remarks, replies, and witticisms which the viscountess heard from the lips of the celebrated Camille Maupin *herself*. She was, however, very careful not to repeat, not even to comprehend, the actual replies made by Mademoiselle des Touches to her absurd questions about Camille's authorship, — a penance to which all authors are subjected, and which often make them expiate the few and rare pleasures that they win.

“How do you write your books?” she began.

“Much as you do your worsted-work or knitting,” replied Camille.

“But where do you find those deep reflections, those seductive pictures?”

“Where you find the witty things you say, madame; there is nothing so easy as to write books, provided you will —”

“Ah! does it depend wholly on the will? I should n't have thought it. Which of your compositions do you prefer?”

“I find it difficult to prefer any of my little kittens.”

“I see you are *blasée* on compliments; there is really nothing new that one can say.”

“I assure you, madame, that I am very sensible to the form which you give to yours.”

The viscountess, anxious not to seem to neglect the marquise, remarked, looking at Béatrix with a meaning air, —

“I shall never forget this journey made between Wit and Beauty.”

“You flatter me, madame,” said the marquise,

laughing. "I assure you that my wit is but a small matter, not to be mentioned by the side of genius; besides, I think I have not said much as yet."

Charlotte, who keenly felt her mother's absurdity, looked at her, endeavoring to stop its course; but Madame de Kergaronët went bravely on in her tilt with the satirical Parisians.

Calyste, who was trotting slowly beside the carriage, could only see the faces of the two ladies on the front seat, and his eyes expressed, from time to time, rather painful thoughts. Forced, by her position, to let herself be looked at, Béatrix constantly avoided meeting the young man's eyes, and practised a manœuvrè most exasperating to lovers; she held her shawl crossed and her hands crossed over it, apparently plunged in the deepest meditation.

At a part of the road which is shaded, dewy, and verdant as a forest glade, where the wheels of the carriage scarcely sounded, and the breeze brought down balsamic odors and waved the branches above their heads, Camille called Madame de Rochefide's attention to the harmonies of the place, and pressed her knee to make her look at Calyste.

"How well he rides!" she said.

"Oh! Calyste does everything well," said Charlotte.

"He rides like an Englishman," said the marquise, indifferently.

"His mother is Irish, — an O'Brien," continued Charlotte, who thought herself insulted by such indifference.

Camille and the marquise drove through Guérande with the viscountess and her daughter, to the great

astonishment of the inhabitants, of the town. They left the mother and daughter at the end of the lane leading to the Guénié mansion, where a crowd came near gathering, attracted by so unusual a sight. Calyste had ridden on to announce the arrival of the company to his mother and aunt, who expected them to dinner, that meal having been postponed till four o'clock. Then he returned to the gate to give his arm to the two ladies, and bid Camille and Béatrix adieu.

He kissed the hand of Félicité, hoping thereby to be able to do the same to that of the marquise; but she still kept her arms crossed resolutely, and he cast moist glances of entreaty at her uselessly.

"You little ninny!" whispered Camille, lightly touching his ear with a kiss that was full of friendship.

"Quite true," thought Calyste to himself as the carriage drove away. "I am forgetting her advice — but I shall always forget it, I'm afraid."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël (who had intrepidly returned to Guérande on the back of a hired horse), the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, and Charlotte found dinner ready, and were treated with the utmost cordiality, if luxury were lacking, by the du Guénics. Mademoiselle Zéphirine had ordered the best wine to be brought from the cellar, and Mariotte had surpassed herself in her Breton dishes.

The viscountess, proud of her trip with the illustrious Camille Maupin, endeavored to explain to the assembled company the present condition of modern literature, and Camille's place in it. But the literary

topic met the fate of whist; neither the du Guénics, nor the abbé, nor the Chevalier du Halga understood one word of it. The rector and the chevalier had arrived in time for the liqueurs at dessert.

As soon as Mariotte, assisted by Gasselín and Madame de Kergarouët's maid, had cleared the table, there was a general and enthusiastic cry for *mouche*. Joy appeared to reign in the household. All supposed Calyste to be free of his late entanglement, and almost as good as married to the little Charlotte. The young man alone kept silence. For the first time in his life he had instituted comparisons between his life-long friends and the two elegant women, witty, accomplished, and tasteful, who, at the present moment, must be laughing heartily at the provincial mother and daughter, judging by the look he intercepted between them.

He was seeking in vain for some excuse to leave his family on this occasion, and go up as usual to Les Touches, when Madame de Kergarouët mentioned that she regretted not having accepted Mademoiselle des Touches' offer of her carriage for the return journey to Saint-Nazaire, which, for the sake of her three other "dear kittens," she felt compelled to make on the following day.

Fanny, who alone saw her son's uneasiness, and the little hold which Charlotte's coquetries and her mother's attentions were gaining on him, came to his aid.

"Madame," she said to the viscountess, "you will, I think, be very uncomfortable in the carrier's vehicle, and especially at having to start so early in the morn-

ing. You would certainly have done better to take the offer made to you by Mademoiselle des Touches. But it is not too late to do so now. Calyste, go up to Les Touches and arrange the matter; but don't be long; return to us soon."

"It won't take me ten minutes," cried Calyste, kissing his mother violently as she followed him to the door.

XI.

FEMALE DIPLOMACY.

CALYSTE ran with the lightness of a young fawn to Les Touches and reached the portico just as Camille and Béatrix were leaving the grand salon after their dinner. He had the sense to offer his arm to Félicité.

“So you have abandoned your viscountess and her daughter for us,” she said, pressing his arm; “we are able now to understand the full merit of that sacrifice.”

“Are these Kergarouets related to the Portenduères, and to old Admiral de Kergarouët, whose widow married Charles de Vandenesse?” asked Madame de Rochefide.

“The viscountess is the admiral’s great-niece,” replied Camille.

“Well, she’s a charming girl,” said Béatrix, placing herself gracefully in a Gothic chair. “She will just do for you, Monsieur du Guénic.”

“The marriage will never take place,” said Camille hastily.

Mortified by the cold, calm air with which the marquise seemed to consider the Breton girl as the only creature fit to mate him, Calyste remained speechless and even mindless.

“Why so, Camille?” asked Madame de Rochefide.

“Really, my dear,” said Camille, seeing Calyste’s despair, “you are not generous; did I advise Conti to marry?”

Béatrix looked at her friend with a surprise that was mingled with indefinable suspicions.

Calyste, unable to understand Camille’s motive, but feeling that she came to his assistance and seeing in her cheeks that faint spot of color which he knew to mean the presence of some violent emotion, went up to her rather awkwardly and took her hand. But she left him and seated herself carelessly at the piano, like a woman so sure of her friend and lover that she can afford to leave him with another woman. She played variations, improvising them as she played, on certain themes chosen, unconsciously to herself, by the impulse of her mind; they were melancholy in the extreme.

Béatrix seemed to listen to the music, but she was really observing Calyste, who, much too young and artless for the part which Camille was intending him to play, remained in rapt adoration before his real idol.

After about an hour, during which time Camille continued to play, Béatrix rose and retired to her apartments. Camille at once took Calyste into her chamber and closed the door, fearing to be overheard; for women have an amazing instinct of distrust.

“My child,” she said, “if you want to succeed with Béatrix, you must seem to love me still, or you will fail. You are a child; you know nothing of women; all you know is how to love. Now loving and making one’s self beloved are two very different things. If you go your own way you will fall into horrible suf-

fering, and I wish to see you happy. If you rouse, not the pride, but the self-will, the obstinacy which is a strong feature in her character, she is capable of going off at any moment to Paris and rejoining Conti; and what will you do then?"

"I shall love her."

"You won't see her again."

"Oh! yes, I shall," he said.

"How?"

"I shall follow her."

"Why, you are as poor as Job, my dear boy."

"My father, Gasselin, and I lived for three months in Vendée on one hundred and fifty francs, marching night and day."

"Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches, "now listen to me. I know that you have too much candor to play a part, too much honesty to deceive; and I don't want to corrupt such a nature as yours. Yet deception is the only way by which you can win Béatrix; I take it therefore upon myself. In a week from now she shall love you."

"Is it possible?" he said clasping his hands.

"Yes," replied Camille, "but it will be necessary to overcome certain pledges which she has made to herself. I will do that for you. You must not interfere in the rather arduous task I shall undertake. The marquise has a true aristocratic delicacy of perception; she is keenly distrustful; no hunter could meet with game more wary or more difficult to capture. You are wholly unable to cope with her; will you promise me a blind obedience?"

"What must I do?" replied the youth.

“Very little,” said Camille. “Come here every day and devote yourself to me. Come to my rooms; avoid Béatrix if you meet her. We will stay together till four o’clock; you shall employ the time in study, and I in smoking. It will be hard for you not to see her, but I will find you a number of interesting books. You have read nothing as yet of George Sand. I will send one of my people this very evening to Nantes to buy her works and those of other authors whom you ought to know. The evenings we will all spend together, and I permit you to make love to me if you can — it will be for the best.”

“I know, Camille, that your affection for me is great and so rare that it makes me wish I had never met Béatrix,” he replied with simple good faith; “but I don’t see what you hope from all this.”

“I hope to make her love you.”

“Good heavens! it cannot be possible!” he cried, again clasping his hands toward Camille, who was greatly moved on seeing the joy that she gave him at her own expense.

“Now listen to me carefully,” she said. “If you break the agreement between us, if you have — not a long conversation — but a mere exchange of words with the marquise in private, if you let her question you, if you fail in the silent part I ask you to play, which is certainly not a very difficult one; I do assure you,” she said in a serious tone, “you will lose her forever.”

“I don’t understand the meaning of what you are saying to me,” cried Calyste, looking at Camille with adorable naïveté.

“If you did understand it, you would n't be the noble and beautiful Calyste that you are,” she replied, taking his hand and kissing it.

Calyste then did what he had never before done; he took Camille round the waist and kissed her gently, not with love but with tenderness, as he kissed his mother. Mademoiselle des Touches did not restrain her tears.

“Go now,” she said, “my child; and tell your viscountess that my carriage is at her command.”

Calyste wanted to stay longer, but he was forced to obey her imperious and imperative gesture.

He went home gayly; he believed that in a week the beautiful Béatrix would love him. The players at *mouche* found him once more the Calyste they had missed for the last two months. Charlotte attributed this change to herself. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was charming to him. The Abbé Grimont endeavored to make out what was passing in the mother's mind. The Chevalier du Halga rubbed his hands. The two old maids were as lively as lizards. The viscountess lost one hundred sous by accumulated *mouches*, which so excited the cupidity of Zéphirine that she regretted not being able to see the cards, and even spoke sharply to her sister-in-law, who acted as the proxy of her eyes.

The party lasted till eleven o'clock. There were two defections, the baron and the chevalier, who went to sleep in their respective chairs. Mariotte had made galettes of buckwheat, the baroness produced a tea-caddy. The illustrious house of du Guénic served a little supper before the departure of its guests, consist-

ing of fresh butter, fruits, and cream, in addition to Mariotte's cakes; for which festal event issued from their wrappings a silver teapot and some beautiful old English china sent to the baroness by her aunts. This appearance of modern splendor in the ancient hall, together with the exquisite grace of its mistress, brought up like a true Irish lady to make and pour out tea (that mighty affair to Englishwomen), had something charming about them. The most exquisite luxury could never have attained to the simple, modest, noble effect produced by this sentiment of joyful hospitality.

A few moments after Calyste's departure from Les Touches, Béatrix, who had heard him go, returned to Camille, whom she found with humid eyes lying back on her sofa.

"What is it, Félicité?" asked the marquise.

"I am forty years old, and I love him!" said Mademoiselle des Touches, with dreadful tones of anguish in her voice, her eyes becoming hard and brilliant. "If you knew, Béatrix, the tears I have shed over the lost years of my youth! To be loved out of pity! to know that one owes one's happiness only to perpetual care, to the slyness of cats, to traps laid for innocence and all the youthful virtues — oh, it is infamous! If it were not that one finds absolution in the magnitude of love, in the power of happiness, in the certainty of being forever above all other women in his memory, the first to carve on that young heart the ineffaceable happiness of an absolute devotion, I would — yes, if he asked it, — I would fling myself into the sea. Sometimes I find myself

wishing that he would ask it; it would then be an oblation, not a suicide. - Ah, Béatrix, by coming here you have, unconsciously, set me a hard task. I know it will be difficult to keep him against you; but you love Conti, you are noble and generous, you will not deceive me; on the contrary, you will help me to retain my Calyste's love. I expected the impression you would make upon him, but I have not committed the mistake of seeming jealous; that would only have added fuel to the flame. On the contrary, before you came, I described you in such glowing colors that you hardly realize the portrait, although you are, it seems to me, more beautiful than ever."

This vehement elegy, in which truth was mingled with deception, completely duped the marquise. Claude Vignon had told Conti the reasons for his departure, and Béatrix was, of course, informed of them. She determined therefore to behave with generosity and give the cold shoulder to Calyste; but at the same instant there came into her soul that quiver of joy which vibrates in the heart of every woman when she finds herself beloved. The love a woman inspires in any man's heart is flattery without hypocrisy, and it is impossible for some women to forego it; but when that man belongs to a friend, his homage gives more than pleasure, — it gives delight. Béatrix sat down beside her friend and began to coax her prettily.

"You have not a white hair," she said; "you have n't even a wrinkle; your temples are just as fresh as ever; whereas I know more than one woman of thirty who is obliged to cover hers. Look, dear,"

she added, lifting her curls, "see what that journey to Italy has cost me."

Her temples showed an almost imperceptible withering of the texture of the delicate skin. She raised her sleeves and showed Camille the same slight withering of the wrists, where the transparent tissue suffered the blue network of swollen veins to be visible, and three deep lines made a bracelet of wrinkles.

"There, my dear, are two spots which — as a certain writer ferreting for the miseries of women, has said — never lie," she continued. "One must needs have suffered to know the truth of his observation. Happily for us, most men know nothing about it; they don't read us like that dreadful author."

"Your letter told me all," replied Camille; "happiness ignores everything but itself. You boasted too much of yours to be really happy. Truth is deaf, dumb, and blind where love really is. Consequently, seeing very plainly that you have your reasons for abandoning Conti, I have feared to have you here. My dear, Calyste is an angel; he is as good as he is beautiful; his innocent heart will not resist your eyes; already he admires you too much not to love you at the first encouragement; your coldness can alone preserve him to me. I confess to you, with the cowardice of true passion, that if he were taken from me I should die. That dreadful book of Benjamin Constant, 'Adolphe,' tells us only of Adolphe's sorrows; but what about those of the woman, hey? The man did not observe them enough to describe them; and what woman would dare to reveal them? They would dishonor her sex, humiliate its virtues, and

pass into vice. Ah! I measure the abyss before me by my fears, by these sufferings that are those of hell. But, Béatrix, I will tell you this: in case I am abandoned, my choice is made."

"What is it?" cried Béatrix, with an eagerness that made Camille shudder.

The two friends looked at each other with the keen attention of Venetian inquisitors; their souls clashed in that rapid glance, and struck fire like flints. The marquise lowered her eyes.

"After man, there is nought but God," said the celebrated woman. "God is the Unknown. I shall fling myself into that as into some vast abyss. Calyste has sworn to me that he admires you only as he would a picture; but alas! you are but twenty-eight, in the full magnificence of your beauty. The struggle thus begins between him and me by falsehood. But I have one support; happily I know a means to keep him true to me, and I shall triumph."

"What means?"

"That is my secret, dear. Let me have the benefits of my age. If Claude Vignon, as Conti has doubtless told you, flings me back into the gulf, I, who had climbed to a rock which I thought inaccessible, — I will at least gather the pale and fragile, but delightful flowers that grow in its depths."

Madame de Rochefide was moulded like wax in those able hands. Camille felt an almost savage pleasure in thus entrapping her rival in her toils. She sent her to bed that night piqued by curiosity, floating between jealousy and generosity, but most assuredly with her mind full of the beautiful Calyste.

“She will be enchanted to deceive me,” thought Camille, as she kissed her good-night.

Then, when she was alone, the author, the constructor of dramas, gave place to the woman, and she burst into tears. Filling her hookah with tobacco soaked in opium, she spent the greater part of the night in smoking, dulling thus the sufferings of her soul, and seeing through the clouds about her the beautiful young head of her late lover.

“What a glorious book to write, if I were only to express my pain!” she said to herself. “But it is written already; Sappho lived before me. And Sappho was young. A fine and touching heroine truly, a woman of forty! Ah! my poor Camille, smoke your hookah; you have n’t even the resource of making a poem of your misery — that’s the last drop of anguish in your cup!”

The next morning Calyste came before mid-day and slipped upstairs, as he was told, into Camille’s own room, where he found the books. Félicité sat before the window, smoking, contemplating in turn the marshes, the sea, and Calyste, to whom she now and then said a few words about *Béatrix*. At one time, seeing the marquise strolling about the garden, she raised a curtain in a way to attract her attention, and also to throw a band of light across Calyste’s book.

“To-day, my child, I shall ask you to stay to dinner; but you must refuse, with a glance at the marquise, which will show her how much you regret not staying.”

When the three actors met in the salon, and this comedy was played, Calyste felt for a moment his

equivocal position, and the glance that he cast on Béatrix was far more expressive than Félicité expected. Béatrix had dressed herself charmingly.

“What a bewitching toilet, my dearest!” said Camille, when Calyste had departed.

These manœuvres lasted six days, during which time many conversations, into which Camille Maupin put all her ability, took place, unknown to Calyste, between herself and the marquise. They were like the preliminaries of a duel between the two women, — a duel without truce, in which the assault was made on both sides with snares, feints, false generosities, deceitful confessions, crafty confidences, by which one hid and the other bared her love; and in which the sharp steel of Camille’s treacherous words entered the heart of her friend, and left its poison there. Béatrix at last took offence at what she thought Camille’s distrust; she considered it out of place between them. At the same time she was enchanted to find the great writer a victim to the pettiness of her sex, and she resolved to enjoy the pleasure of showing her where her greatness ended, and how even she could be humiliated.

“My dear, what is to be the excuse to-day for Monsieur du Guénic’s not dining with us?” she asked, looking maliciously at her friend. “Monday you said we had engagements; Tuesday the dinner was poor; Wednesday you were afraid his mother would be angry; Thursday you wanted to take a walk with me; and yesterday you simply dismissed him without a reason. To-day I shall have my way, and I mean that he shall stay.”

“Already, my dear!” said Camille, with cutting irony. The marquise blushed. “Stay, Monsieur du Guénic,” said Camille, in the tone of a queen.

Béatrix became cold and hard, contradictory in tone, epigrammatic, and almost rude to Calyste, whom Félicité sent home to play *mouche* with Charlotte de Kergarouët.

“*She* is not dangerous at any rate,” said Béatrix, sarcastically.

Young lovers are like hungry men; kitchen odors will not appease their hunger; they think too much of what is coming to care for the means that bring it. As Calyste walked back to Guérande, his soul was full of Béatrix; he paid no heed to the profound feminine cleverness which Félicité was displaying on his behalf. During this week the marquise had only written once to Conti, a symptom of indifference which had not escaped the watchful eyes of Camille, who imparted it to Calyste. All Calyste’s life was concentrated in the short moment of the day during which he was allowed to see the marquise. This drop of water, far from allaying his thirst, only redoubled it. The magic promise, “Béatrix shall love you,” made by Camille, was the talisman with which he strove to restrain the fiery ardor of his passion. But he knew not how to consume the time; he could not sleep, and spent the hours of the night in reading; every evening he brought back with him, as Mariotte remarked, cartloads of books.

His aunt called down maledictions on the head of Mademoiselle des Touches; but his mother, who had gone on several occasions to his room on seeing his

light burning far into the night, knew by this time the secret of his conduct. Though for her love was a sealed book, and she was even unaware of her own ignorance, Fanny rose through maternal tenderness into certain ideas of it; but the depths of such sentiment being dark and obscured by clouds to her mind, she was shocked at the state in which she saw him; the solitary uncomprehended desire of his soul, which was evidently consuming him, simply terrified her. Calyste had but one thought; Béatrix was always before him. In the evenings, while cards were being played, his abstraction resembled his father's somnolence. Finding him so different from what he was when he loved Camille, the baroness became aware, with a sort of horror, of the symptoms of real love, — a species of possession which had seized upon her son, — a love unknown within the walls of that old mansion.

Feverish irritability, a constant absorption in thought, made Calyste almost doltish. Often he would sit for hours with his eyes fixed on some figure in the tapestry. One morning his mother implored him to give up *Les Touches*, and leave the two women forever.

“Not go to *Les Touches*!” he cried.

“Oh! yes, yes, go! do not look so, my darling!” she cried, kissing him on the eyes that had flashed such flames.

Under these circumstances Calyste often came near losing the fruit of Camille's plot through the Breton fury of his love, of which he was ceasing to be the master. Finally, he swore to himself, in spite of his

promise to Félicité, to see Béatrix, and speak to her. He wanted to read her eyes, to bathe in their light, to examine every detail of her dress, breathe its perfume, listen to the music of her voice, watch the graceful composition of her movements, embrace at a glance the whole figure, and study her as a general studies the field where he means to win a decisive battle. He willed as lovers will; he was grasped by desires which closed his ears and darkened his intellect, and threw him into an unnatural state in which he was conscious of neither obstacles, nor distances, nor the existence even of his own body.

One morning he resolved to go to Les Touches at an earlier hour than that agreed upon, and endeavor to meet Béatrix in the garden. He knew she walked there daily before breakfast.

Mademoiselle des Touches and the marquise had gone, as it happened, to see the marshes and the little bay with its margin of fine sand, where the sea penetrates and lies like a lake in the midst of the dunes. They had just returned, and were walking up a garden path beside the lawn, conversing as they walked.

“If the scenery pleases you,” said Camille, “we must take Calyste and make a trip to Croisic. There are splendid rocks there, cascades of granite, little bays with natural basins, charmingly unexpected and capricious things, besides the sea itself, with its store of marble fragments, — a world of amusement. Also you will see women making fuel with cow-dung, which they nail against the walls of their houses to dry in the sun, after which they pile it up as we do peat in Paris.”

“What! will you really risk Calyste?” cried the marquise, laughing, in a tone which proved that Camille’s ruse had answered its purpose.

“Ah, my dear,” she replied, “if you did but know the angelic soul of that dear child, you would understand me. In him, mere beauty is nothing; one must enter that pure heart, which is amazed at every step it takes into the kingdom of love. What faith! what grace! what innocence! The ancients were right enough in the worship they paid to sacred beauty. Some traveller, I forget who, relates that when wild horses lose their leader they choose the handsomest horse in the herd for his successor. Beauty, my dear, is the genius of things; it is the ensign which Nature hoists over her most precious creations; it is the truest of symbols as it is the greatest of accidents. Did any one ever suppose that angels could be deformed? are they not necessarily a combination of grace and strength? What is it that makes us stand for hours before some picture in Italy, where genius has striven through years of toil to realize but one of those accidents of Nature? Come, call up your sense of the truth of things and answer me; is it not the Idea of Beauty which our souls associate with moral grandeur? Well, Calyste is one of those dreams, those visions, realized. He has the regal power of a lion, tranquilly unsuspecting of its royalty. When he feels at his ease, he is witty; and I love his girlish timidity. My soul rests in his heart away from all corruptions, all ideas of knowledge, literature, the world, society, politics, — those useless accessories under which we stifle happiness. I am what I have

never been, — a child! I am sure of him, but I like to play at jealousy; he likes it too. Besides, that is part of my secret.”

Béatrix walked on pensively, in silence. Camille endured unspeakable martyrdom, and she cast a side-long glance at her companion which looked like flame.

“Ah, my dear; but *you* are happy,” said Béatrix presently, laying her hand on Camille’s arm like a woman wearied out with some inward struggle.

“Yes, happy indeed!” replied Félicité, with savage bitterness.

The two women dropped upon a bench from a sense of exhaustion. No creature of her sex was ever played upon like an instrument with more Macchiavellian penetration than the marquise throughout this week.

“Yes, you are happy, but I!” she said, — “to know of Conti’s infidelities, and have to bear them!”

“Why not leave him?” said Camille, seeing the hour had come to strike a decisive blow.

“Can I?”

“Oh! poor boy!”

Both were gazing into a clump of trees with a stupefied air.

Camille rose.

“I will go and hasten breakfast; my walk has given me an appetite,” she said.

“Our conversation has taken away mine,” remarked Béatrix.

The marquise in her morning dress was outlined in white against the dark greens of the foliage. Calyste,

who had slipped through the salon into the garden, took a path, along which he sauntered as though he were meeting her by accident. Béatrix could not restrain a slight quiver as he approached her.

“Madame, in what way did I displease you yesterday?” he said, after the first commonplace sentences had been exchanged.

“But you have neither pleased me nor displeased me,” she said, in a gentle voice.

The tone, air, and manner in which the marquise said these words encouraged Calyste.

“Am I so indifferent to you?” he said in a troubled voice, as the tears came into his eyes.

“Ought we not to be indifferent to each other?” replied the marquise. “Have we not, each of us, another, and a binding attachment?”

“Oh!” cried Calyste, “if you mean Camille, I did love her, but I love her no longer.”

“Then why are you shut up together every morning?” she said, with a treacherous smile. “I don’t suppose that Camille, in spite of her passion for tobacco, prefers her cigar to you, or that you, in your admiration for female authors, spend four hours a day in reading their romances.”

“So then you know —” began the guileless young Breton, his face glowing with the happiness of being face to face alone with his idol.

“Calyste!” cried Camille, angrily, suddenly appearing and interrupting him. She took his arm and drew him away to some distance. “Calyste, is this what you promised me?”

Béatrix heard these words of reproach as Made-

moiselle des Touches disappeared toward the house, taking Calyste with her. She was stupefied by the young man's assertion, and could not comprehend it; she was not as strong as Claude Vignou. In truth, the part being played by Camille Maupin, as shocking as it was grand, is one of those wicked grandeurs which women only practise when driven to extremity. By it their hearts are broken; in it the feelings of their sex are lost to them; it begins an abnegation which ends by either plunging them to hell, or lifting them to heaven.

During breakfast, which Calyste was invited to share, the marquise, whose sentiments could be noble and generous, made a sudden return upon herself, resolving to stifle the germs of love which were rising in her heart. She was neither cold nor hard to Calyste, but gently indifferent, — a course which tortured him. Félicité brought forward a proposition that they should make, on the next day but one, an excursion into the curious and interesting country lying between Les Touches, Croisic, and the village of Batz. She begged Calyste to employ himself on the morrow in hiring a boat and sailors to take them across the little bay, undertaking herself to provide horses and provisions, and all else that was necessary for a party of pleasure, in which there was to be no fatigue. Béatrix stopped the matter short, however, by saying that she did not wish to make excursions round the country. Calyste's face, which had beamed with delight at the prospect, was suddenly overclouded.

“What are you afraid of, my dear?” asked Camille.

“My position is so delicate I do not wish to compromise — I will not say my reputation, but my happiness,” she said, meaningly, with a glance at the young Breton. “You know very well how suspicious Conti can be; if he knew — ”

“Who will tell him?”

“He is coming back here to fetch me,” said Béatrix.

Calyste turned pale. In spite of all that Camille could urge, in spite of Calyste’s entreaties, Madame de Rochefide remained inflexible, and showed what Camille had called her obstinacy. Calyste left Les Touches the victim of one of those depressions of love which threaten, in certain men, to turn into madness. He began to revolve in his mind some decided means of coming to an explanation with Béatrix.

XII.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WHEN Calyste reached home, he did not leave his room until dinner time; and after dinner he went back to it. At ten o'clock his mother, uneasy at his absence, went to look for him, and found him writing in the midst of a pile of blotted and half-torn paper. He was writing to Béatrix, for distrust of Camille had come into his mind. The air and manner of the marquise during their brief interview in the garden had singularly encouraged him.

No first love-letter ever was or ever will be, as may readily be supposed, a brilliant effort of the mind. In all young men not tainted by corruption such a letter is written with gushings from the heart, too overflowing, too multifarious not to be the essence, the elixir of many other letters begun, rejected, and rewritten.

Here is the one that Calyste finally composed and which he read aloud to his poor, astonished mother. To her the old mansion seemed to have taken fire; this love of her son flamed up in it like the glare of a conflagration.

Calyste to Madame la Marquise de Rochefide.

MADAME, — I loved you when you were to me but a dream; judge, therefore, of the force my love ac-

quired when I saw you. The dream was far surpassed by the reality. It is my grief and my misfortune to have nothing to say to you that you do not know already of your beauty and your charm; and yet, perhaps, they have awakened in no other heart so deep a sentiment as they have in me.

In so many ways you are beautiful; I have studied you so much while thinking of you day and night that I have penetrated the mysteries of your being, the secrets of your heart, and your delicacy, so little appreciated. Have you ever been loved, understood, adored as you deserve to be?

Let me tell you now that there is not a trait in your nature which my heart does not interpret; your pride is understood by mine; the grandeur of your glance, the grace of your bearing, the distinction of your movements, — all things about your person are in harmony with the thoughts, the hopes, the desires hidden in the depths of your soul; it is because I have divined them all that I think myself worthy of your notice. If I had not become, within the last few days, another yourself, I could not speak to you of myself; this letter, indeed, relates far more to you than it does to me.

Béatrix, in order to write to you, I have silenced my youth, I have laid aside myself, I have aged my thoughts, — or, rather, it is you who have aged them, by this week of dreadful sufferings caused, innocently indeed, by you.

Do not think me one of those common lovers at whom I have heard you laugh so justly. What merit is there in loving a young and beautiful and wise

and noble woman Alas! I have no merit! What can I be to you? A child, attracted by effulgence of beauty and by moral grandeur, as the insects are attracted to the light. You cannot do otherwise than tread upon the flowers of my soul; they are there at your feet, and all my happiness consists in your stepping on them.

Absolute devotion, unbounded faith, love unquenchable, — all these treasures of a true and tender heart are nothing, nothing! they serve only to love with, they cannot win the love we crave. Sometimes I do not understand why a worship so ardent does not warm its idol; and when I meet your eye, so cold, so stern, I turn to ice within me. Your disdain, *that* is the acting force between us, not my worship. Why? You cannot hate me as much as I love you; why, then, does the weaker feeling rule the stronger? I loved Félicité with all the powers of my heart; yet I forgot her in a day, in a moment, when I saw you. She was my error; you are my truth.

You have, unknowingly, destroyed my happiness, and yet you owe me nothing in return. I loved Camille without hope, and I have no hope from you; nothing is changed but my divinity. I was a pagan; I am now a Christian, that is all —

Except this: you have taught me that to love is the greatest of all joys; the joy of being loved comes later. According to Camille, it is not loving to love for a short time only; the love that does not grow from day to day, from hour to hour, is a mere wretched passion. In order to grow, love must not see its end; and she saw the end of ours, the setting of

our sun of love. When I beheld you, I understood her words, which, until then, I had disputed with all my youth, with all the ardor of my desires, with the despotic sternness of twenty years. That grand and noble Camille mingled her tears with mine, and yet she firmly rejected the love she saw must end. Therefore I am free to love you here on earth and in the heaven above us, as we love God. If you loved me, you would have no such arguments as Camille used to overthrow my love. We are both young; we could fly on equal wing across our sunny heaven, not fearing storms as that grand eagle feared them.

But ah! what am I saying? my thoughts have carried me beyond the humility of my real hopes. Believe, believe in the submission, the patience, the mute adoration which I only ask you not to wound uselessly. I know, Béatrix, that you cannot love me without the loss of your self-esteem; therefore I ask for no return. Camille once said there was some hidden fatality in names, *à propos* of hers. That fatality I felt for myself on the jetty of Guérande, when I read on the shores of the ocean your name. Yes, you will pass through my life as Beatrice passed through that of Dante. My heart will be a pedestal for that white statue, cold, distant, jealous, and oppressive.

It is forbidden to you to love me; I know that. You will suffer a thousand deaths, you will be betrayed, humiliated, unhappy; but you have in you a devil's pride, which binds you to that column you have once embraced, — you are like Samson, you will perish by holding to it. But this I have not divined; my love

is too blind for that; Camille has told it to me. It is not my mind that speaks to you of this, it is hers. I have no mind with which to reason when I think of you; blood gushes from my heart, and its hot wave darkens my intellect, weakens my strength, paralyzes my tongue, and bends my knees. I can only adore you, whatever you may do to me.

Camille calls your resolution obstinacy; I defend you, and I call it virtue. You are only the more beautiful because of it. I know my destiny, and the pride of a Breton can rise to the height of the woman who makes her pride a virtue.

Therefore, dear Béatrix, be kind, be consoling to me. When victims were selected, they crowned them with flowers; so do you to me; you owe me the flowers of pity, the music of my sacrifice. Am I not a proof of your grandeur? Will you not rise to the level of my disdained love, — disdained in spite of its sincerity, in spite of its immortal passion?

Ask Camille how I behaved to her after the day she told me, on her return to Les Touches, that she loved Claude Vignon. I was mute; I suffered in silence. Well, for you I will show even greater strength, — I will bury my feelings in my heart, if you will not drive me to despair, if you will only understand my heroism. A single word of praise from you is enough to make me bear the pains of martyrdom.

But if you persist in this cold silence, this deadly disdain, you will make me think you fear me. Ah, Béatrix, be with me what you are, — charming, witty, gay, and tender. Talk to me of Conti, as Camille has

talked to me of Claude. I have no other spirit in my soul, no other genius but that of love; nothing is there that can make you fear me; I will be in your presence as if I loved you not.

Can you reject so humble a prayer? — the prayer of a child who only asks that his Light shall lighten him, that his Sun may warm him.

He whom you love can be with you at all times, but I, poor Calyste! have so few days in which to see you; you will soon be freed from me. Therefore I may return to Les Touches to-morrow, may I not? You will not refuse my arm for that excursion? We shall go together to Croisic and to Batz? If you do not go I shall take it for an answer, — Calyste will understand it!

There were four more pages of the same sort in close, fine writing, wherein Calyste explained the sort of threat conveyed in the last words, and related his youth and life; but the tale was chiefly told in exclamatory phrases, with many of those points and dashes of which modern literature is so prodigal when it comes to crucial passages, — as though they were planks offered to the reader's imagination, to help him across crevasses. The rest of this artless letter was merely repetition. But if it was not likely to touch Madame de Rochefide, and would very slightly interest the admirers of strong emotions, it made the mother weep, as she said to her son, in her tender voice, —

“My child, you are not happy.”

This tumultuous poem of sentiments which had arisen like a storm in Calyste's heart, terrified the

baroness; for the first time in her life she read a love-letter.

Calyste was standing in deep perplexity; how could he send that letter? He followed his mother back into the salon with the letter in his pocket and burning in his heart like fire. The Chevalier du Halga was still there, and the last deal of a lively *mouche* was going on. Charlotte de Kergaronët, in despair at Calyste's indifference, was paying attention to his father as a means of promoting her marriage. Calyste wandered hither and thither like a butterfly which had flown into the room by mistake. At last, when *mouche* was over, he drew the Chevalier du Halga into the great salon, from which he sent away Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's page and Mariotte.

"What does he want of the chevalier?" said old Zéphirine, addressing her friend Jacqueline.

"Calyste strikes me as half-crazy," replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. "He pays Charlotte no more attention than if she were a *paludière*."

Remembering that the Chevalier du Halga had the reputation of having navigated in his youth the waters of gallantry, it came into Calyste's head to consult him.

"What is the best way to send a letter secretly to one's mistress?" he said to the old gentleman in a whisper.

"Well, you can slip it into the hand of her maid with a louis or two underneath it; for sooner or later the maid will find out the secret, and it is just as well to let her into it at once," replied the chevalier, on whose face was the gleam of a smile. "But, on the whole, it is best to give the letter yourself."

“A louis or two!” exclaimed Calyste.

He snatched up his hat and ran to Les Touches, where he appeared like an apparition in the little salon, guided thither by the voices of Camille and Béatrix. They were sitting on the sofa together, apparently on the best of terms. Calyste, with the headlong impulse of love, flung himself heedlessly on the sofa beside the marquise, took her hand, and slipped the letter within it. He did this so rapidly that Félicité, watchful as she was, did not perceive it. Calyste’s heart was tingling with an emotion half sweet, half painful, as he felt the hand of Béatrix press his own, and saw her, without interrupting her words, or seeming in the least disconcerted, slip the letter into her glove.

“You fling yourself on a woman’s dress without mercy,” she said, laughing.

“Calyste is a boy who is wanting in common-sense,” said Félicité, not sparing him an open rebuke.

Calyste rose, took Camille’s hand, and kissed it. Then he went to the piano and ran his finger-nail over the notes, making them all sound at once, like a rapid scale. This exuberance of joy surprised Camille, and made her thoughtful; she signed to Calyste to come to her.

“What is the matter with you?” she whispered in his ear.

“Nothing,” he replied.

“There is something between them,” thought Mademoiselle des Touches.

The marquise was impenetrable. Camille tried to

make Calyste talk, hoping that his artless mind would betray itself; but the youth excused himself on the ground that his mother expected him, and he left Les Touches at eleven o'clock, — not, however, without having faced the fire of a piercing glance from Camille, to whom that excuse was made for the first time.

After the agitations of a wakeful night filled with visions of Béatrix, and after going a score of times through the chief street of Guérande for the purpose of meeting the answer to his letter, which did not come, Calyste finally received the following reply, which the marquise's waiting-woman, entering the hôtel du Guénic, presented to him. He carried it to the garden, and there, in the grotto, he read as follows: —

Madame de Rochefide to Calyste.

You are a noble child, but you are only a child. You are bound to Camille, who adores you. You would not find in me either the perfections that distinguish her or the happiness that she can give you. Whatever you may think, she is young and I am old; her heart is full of treasures, mine is empty; she has for you a devotion you ill appreciate; she is unselfish; she lives only for and in you. I, on the other hand, am full of doubts; I should drag you down to a wearisome life, without grandeur of any kind, — a life ruined by my own conduct. Camille is free; she can go and come as she will; I am a slave.

You forget that I love and am beloved. The situation in which I have placed myself forbids my accept-

ing homage. That a man should love me, or say he loves me, is an insult. To turn to another would be to place myself at the level of the lowest of my sex.

You, who are young and full of delicacy, how can you oblige me to say these things, which rend my heart as they issue from it?

I preferred the scandal of an irreparable deed to the shame of constant deception; my own loss of station to a loss of honesty. In the eyes of many persons whose esteem I value, I am still worthy; but if I permitted another man to love me, I should fall indeed. The world is indulgent to those whose constancy covers, as with a mantle, the irregularity of their happiness; but it is pitiless to vice.

You see I feel neither disdain nor anger; I am answering your letter frankly and with simplicity. You are young; you are ignorant of the world; you are carried away by fancy; you are incapable, like all whose lives are pure, of making the reflections which evil suggests. But I will go still further.

Were I destined to be the most humiliated of women, were I forced to hide fearful sorrows, were I betrayed, abandoned, — which, thank God, is wholly impossible, — no one in this world would see me more. Yes, I believe I should find courage to kill a man who, seeing me in that situation, should talk to me of love.

You now know my mind to its depths. Perhaps I ought to thank you for having written to me. After receiving your letter, and, above all, after making you this reply, I could be at my ease with you in Camille's house, I could act out my natural self, and be what

you ask of me; but I hardly need speak to you of the bitter ridicule that would overwhelm me if my eyes or my manner ceased to express the sentiments of which you complain. A second robbery from Camille would be a proof of her want of power which no woman could twice forgive. Even if I loved you, if I were blind to all else, if I forgot all else, I should still see Camille! Her love for you is a barrier too high to be o'erleaped by any power, even by the wings of an angel; none but a devil would fail to recoil before such treachery. In this, my dear Calyste, are many motives which delicate and noble women keep to themselves, of which you men know nothing; nor could you understand them, even though you were all as like our sex as you yourself appear to be at this moment.

My child, you have a mother who has shown you what you ought to be in life. She is pure and spotless; she fulfils her destiny nobly; what I have heard of her has filled my eyes with tears, and in the depths of my heart I envy her. I, too, might have been what she is! Calyste, that is the woman your wife should be, and such should be her life. I will never send you back, in jest, as I have done, to that little Charlotte, who would weary you to death; but I do commend you to some divine young girl who is worthy of your love.

If I were yours, your life would be blighted. You would have given me your whole existence, and I—you see, I am frank—I should have taken it; I should have gone with you, Heaven knows where, far from the world! But I should have made you most unhappy;

for I am jealous. I see lions lurking in the path, and monsters in drops of water. I am made wretched by trifles that most women put up with; inexorable thoughts — from my heart, not yours — would poison our existence and destroy my life. If a man, after ten years' happiness, were not as respectful and as delicate as he was to me at first, I should resent the change; it would abase me in my own eyes! Such a lover could not believe in the Amadis and the Cyrus of my dreams. To-day true love is but a dream, not a reality. I see in yours only the joy of a desire the end of which is, as yet, unperceived by you.

For myself, I am not forty years old; I have not bent my pride beneath the yoke of experience, — in short, I am a woman too young to be anything but odious. I will not answer for my temper; my grace and charm are all external. Perhaps I have not yet suffered enough to have the indulgent manners and the absolute tenderness which come to us from cruel disappointments. Happiness has its insolence, and I, I fear, am insolent. Camille will be always your devoted slave; I should be an unreasonable tyrant. Besides, Camille was brought to you by your guardian angel, at the turning point of your life, to show you the career you ought to follow, — a career in which you cannot fail.

I know Félicité! her tenderness is inexhaustible; she may ignore the graces of our sex, but she possesses that fruitful strength, that genius for constancy, that noble intrepidity which makes us willing to accept the rest. She will marry you to some young girl, no matter what she suffers. She will find you a free

Béatrix — if it is Béatrix indeed who answers to your desires in a wife, and to your dreams; she will smooth all the difficulties in your way. The sale of a single acre of her ground in Paris would free your property in Brittany; she will make you her heir; are you not already her son by adoption?

Alas! what could I do for your happiness? Nothing. Do not betray that infinite love which contents itself with the duties of motherhood. Ah! I think her very fortunate, my Camille! she can well afford to forgive your feeling for poor Béatrix; women of her age are indulgent to such fancies. When they are sure of being loved, they will pardon a passing infidelity; in fact, it is often one of their keenest pleasures to triumph over a younger rival. Camille is above such women, and that remark does not refer to her; but I make it to ease your mind.

I have studied Camille closely; she is, to my eyes, one of the greatest women of our age. She has mind and she has goodness, — two qualities almost irreconcilable in woman; she is generous and simple, — two other grandeurs seldom found together in our sex. I have seen in the depths of her soul such treasures that the beautiful line of Dante on eternal happiness, which I heard her interpreting to you the other day, "*Senza brama sicura ricchezza*," seems as if made for her. She has talked to me of her career; she has related her life, showing me how love, that object of our prayers, our dreams, has ever eluded her. I replied that she seemed to me an instance of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of uniting in one person two great glories.

You, Calyste, are one of the angelic souls whose mate it seems impossible to find; but Camille will obtain for you, even if she dies in doing so, the hand of some young girl with whom you can make a happy home.

For myself, I hold out to you a friendly hand, and I count, not on your heart, but on your mind, to make you in future a brother to me, as I shall be a sister to you; and I desire that this letter may terminate a correspondence which, between Les Touches and Guérande, is rather absurd.

BÉATRIX DE CASTERAN.

The baroness, stirred to the depths of her soul by the strange exhibitions and the rapid changes of her boy's emotions, could no longer sit quietly at her work in the ancient hall. After looking at Calyste from time to time, she finally rose and came to him in a manner that was humble, and yet bold; she wanted him to grant a favor which she felt she had a right to demand.

"Well?" she said, trembling, and looking at the letter, but not directly asking for it.

Calyste read it aloud to her. And these two noble souls, so simple, so guileless, saw nothing in that wily and treacherous epistle of the malice or the snares which the marquise had written into it.

"She is a noble woman, a grand woman!" said the baroness, with moistened eyes. "I will pray to God for her. I did not know that a woman could abandon her husband and child, and yet preserve a soul so virtuous. She is indeed worthy of pardon."

“Have I not every reason to adore her?” cried Calyste.

“But where will this love lead you?” said the baroness. Ah, my child, how dangerous are women with noble sentiments! There is less to fear in those who are bad! Marry Charlotte de Kergarouët and release two-thirds of the estate. By selling a few farms, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël can bestow that grand result upon you in the marriage contract, and she will also help you, with her experience, to make the most of your property. You will be able to leave your children a great name, and a fine estate.”

“Forget Béatrix!” said Calyste, in a muffled voice, with his eyes on the ground.

He left the baroness, and went up to his own room to write an answer to the marquise.

Madame du Guénic, whose heart retained every word of Madame de Rochefide’s letter, felt the need of some help in comprehending it more clearly, and also the grounds of Calyste’s hope. At this hour the Chevalier du Halga was always to be seen taking his dog for a walk on the mall. The baroness, certain of finding him there, put on her bonnet and shawl and went out.

The sight of the Baronne du Guénic walking in Guérande elsewhere than to church, or on the two pretty roads selected as promenades on *fête* days, accompanied by the baron and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, was an event so remarkable that two hours later, throughout the whole town, people accosted each other with the remark, —

“Madame du Guénic went out to-day; did you meet her?”

As soon as this amazing news reached the ears of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, she said to her niece, —

“Something very extraordinary is happening at the du Guénics.”

“Calyste is madly in love with that beautiful Marquise de Rochefide,” said Charlotte. “I ought to leave Guérande and return to Nantes.”

The Chevalier du Halga, much surprised at being sought by the baroness, released the chain of his little dog, aware that he could not divide himself between the two interests.

“Chevalier,” began the baroness, “you used to practise gallantry?”

Here the Chevalier du Halga straightened himself up with an air that was not a little vain. Madame du Guénic, without naming her son or the marquise, repeated, as nearly as possible, the love-letter, and asked the chevalier to explain to her the meaning of such an answer. Du Halga snuffed the air and stroked his chin; he listened attentively; he made grimaces; and finally, he looked fixedly at the baroness with a knowing air, as he said, —

“When thoroughbred horses want to leap a barrier, they go up to reconnoitre it, and smell it over. Calyste is a lucky dog!”

“Oh, hush!” she cried.

“I’m mute. Ah! in the olden time I knew all about it,” said the old chevalier, striking an attitude. “The weather was fine, the breeze nor’east. *Tudieu!* how the ‘Belle-Poule’ kept close to the wind that day when — Oh!” he cried, interrupting himself, “we shall have a change of weather; my ears are buzzing,

and I feel the pain in my ribs! You know, don't you, that the battle of the 'Belle-Poule' was so famous that women wore head-dresses 'à la Belle-Poule.' Madame de Kergarouët was the first to come to the opera in that head-dress, and I said to her: 'Madame, you are dressed for conquest.' The speech was repeated from box to box all through the house."

The baroness listened pleasantly to the old hero, who, faithful to the laws of gallantry, escorted her to the alley of her house, neglecting Thisbe. The secret of Thisbe's existence had once escaped him. Thisbe was the granddaughter of a delightful Thisbe, the pet of Madame l'Amirale de Kergarouët, first wife of the Comte de Kergarouët, the chevalier's commanding officer. The present Thisbe was eighteen years old.

The baroness ran up to Calyste's room. He was absent; she saw a letter, not sealed, but addressed to Madame de Rochefide, lying on the table. An invincible curiosity compelled the anxious mother to read it. This act of indiscretion was cruelly punished. The letter revealed to her the depths of the gulf into which his passion was hurling Calyste.

Calyste to Madame la Marquise de Rochefide.

What care I for the race of the du Guénics in these days, Béatrix? what is their name to me? My name is Béatrix; the happiness of Béatrix is my happiness; her life is my life, and all my fortune is in her heart. Our estates have been mortgaged these two hundred years, and so they may remain for two hundred more;

our farmers have charge of them; no one can take them from us. To see you, to love you, — that is my property, my object, my religion!

You talk to me of marrying! the very thought convulses my heart. Is there another Béatrix? I will marry no one but you; I will wait for you twenty years, if need be. I am young, and you will be ever beautiful. My mother is a saint. I do not blame her, but she has never loved. I know now what she has lost, and what sacrifices she has made. You have taught me, Béatrix, to love her better; she is in my heart with you, and no other can ever be there; she is your only rival, — is not this to say that you reign in that heart supreme? Therefore your arguments have no force upon my mind.

As for Camille, you need only say the word, or give me a mere sign, and I will ask her to tell you herself that I do not love her. She is the mother of my intellect; nothing more, nothing less. From the moment that I first saw you she became to me a sister, a friend, a comrade, what you will of that kind; but we have no rights other than those of friendship upon each other. I took her for a woman until I saw you. You have proved to me that Camille is a man; she swims, hunts, smokes, drinks, rides on horseback, writes and analyzes hearts and books; she has no weaknesses; she marches on in all her strength; her motions even have no resemblance to your graceful movements, to your step, airy as the flight of a bird. Neither has she your voice of love, your tender eyes, your gracious manner; she is Camille Maupin; there is nothing of the woman about her,

XIII.

DUEL BETWEEN WOMEN.

PERHAPS one of the greatest enjoyments that small minds or inferior natures can obtain is that of deceiving a great soul, and laying snares for it. Béatrix knew herself far beneath Camille Maupin. This inferiority lay not only in that collection of mental and moral qualities which we call *talent*, but in the things of the heart called *passion*.

At the moment when Calyste was hurrying to Les Touches with the impetnosity of a first love borne on the wings of hope, the marquise was feeling a keen delight in knowing herself the object of the first love of so charming a young man. She did not go so far as to wish herself a sharer in the sentiment, but she thought it heroism on her part to repress the *capriccio*, as the Italians say. She thought she was equalling Camille's devotion, and told herself, moreover, that she was sacrificing herself to her friend. The vanities peculiar to Frenchwomen, which constitute the celebrated coquetry of which she was so signal an instance, were flattered and deeply satisfied by Calyste's love. Assailed by such powerful seduction, she was resisting it, and her virtues sang in her soul a concert of praise and self-approval.

The two women were half-sitting, half lying, in apparent indolence on the divan of the little salon, so filled with harmony and the fragrance of flowers. The windows were open, for the north wind had ceased to blow. A soothing southerly breeze was ruffling the surface of the salt lake before them, and the sun was glittering on the sands of the shore. Their souls were as deeply agitated as the nature before them was tranquil, and the heat within was not less ardent.

Bruised by the working of the machinery which she herself had set in motion, Camille was compelled to keep watch for her safety, fearing the amazing cleverness of the friendly enemy, or, rather, the inimical friend she had allowed within her borders. To guard her own secrets and maintain herself aloof, she had taken of late to contemplations of nature; she cheated the aching of her own heart by seeking a meaning in the world around her, finding God in that desert of heaven and earth. When an unbeliever once perceives the presence of God, he flings himself unreservedly into Catholicism, which, viewed as a system, is complete.

That morning Camille's brow had worn the halo of thoughts born of these researches during a night-time of painful struggle. Calyste was ever before her like a celestial image. The beautiful youth, to whom she had secretly devoted herself, had become to her a guardian angel. Was it not he who led her into those loftier regions, where suffering ceased beneath the weight of incommensurable infinity? and now a certain air of triumph about Béatrix disturbed her. No woman gains an advantage over another without

allowing it to be felt, however much she may deny having taken it. Nothing was ever more strange in its course than the dumb, moral struggle which was going on between these two women, each hiding from the other a secret, — each believing herself generous through hidden sacrifices.

Calyste arrived, holding the letter between his hand and his glove, ready to slip it at some convenient moment into the hand of Béatrix. Camille, whom the subtle change in the manner of her friend had not escaped, seemed not to watch her, but did watch her in a mirror at the moment when Calyste was just entering the room. That is always a crucial moment for women. The cleverest as well as the silliest of them, the frankest as the shrewdest, are seldom able to keep their secret; it bursts from them, at any rate, to the eyes of another woman. Too much reserve or too little; a free and luminous look; the mysterious lowering of eyelids, — all betray, at that sudden moment, the sentiment which is the most difficult of all to hide; for real indifference has something so radically cold about it that it can never be simulated. Women have a genius for shades, — shades of detail, shades of character; they know them all. There are times when their eyes take in a rival from head to foot; they can guess the slightest movement of a foot beneath a gown, the almost imperceptible motion of the waist; they know the significance of things which, to a man, seem insignificant. Two women observing each other play one of the choicest scenes of comedy that the world can show.

“Calyste has committed some folly,” thought

Camille, perceiving in each of her guests that indefinable air of persons who have a mutual understanding.

There was no longer either stiffness or pretended indifference on the part of Béatrix; she now regarded Calyste as her own property. Calyste was even more transparent; he colored, as guilty people, or happy people color. He announced that he had come to make arrangements for the excursion on the following day.

"Then you really intend to go, my dear?" said Camille, interrogatively.

"Yes," said Béatrix.

"How did you know it, Calyste?" asked *Maiselle des Tonches*.

"I came here to find out," replied Calyste, on a look flashed at him by *Madame de Rochefide*, who did not wish Camille to gain the slightest inkling of their correspondence.

"They have an agreement together," thought Camille, who caught the look in the powerful sweep of her eye.

Under the pressure of that thought a horrible discomposure overspread her face and frightened Béatrix.

"What is the matter, my dear?" she cried.

"Nothing. Well, then, Calyste, send my horses and yours across to *Croisic*, so that we may drive home by way of *Batz*. We will breakfast at *Croisic*, and get home in time for dinner. You must take charge of the boat arrangements. Let us start by half-past eight. You will see some fine sights, Béatrix, and one very strange one; you will see *Cambremer*, a man who does penance on a rock for

having wilfully killed his son. Oh! you are in a primitive land, among a primitive race of people, where men are moved by other sentiments than those of ordinary mortals. Calyste shall tell you the tale; it is a drama of the seashore."

She went into her bedroom, for she was stifling. Calyste gave his letter to Béatrix and followed Camille.

"Calyste, you are loved, I think; but you are hiding something from me; you have done some foolish thing."

"Loved!" he exclaimed, dropping into a chair.

Camille looked into the next room; Béatrix had disappeared. The fact was odd. Women do not usually leave a room which contains the man they admire, unless they have either the certainty of seeing him again, or something better still. Mademoiselle des Touches said to herself:—

"Can he have given her a letter?"

But she thought the innocent Breton incapable of such boldness.

"If you have disobeyed me, all will be lost, through your own fault," she said to him very gravely. "Go, now, and make your preparations for to-morrow."

She made a gesture which Calyste did not venture to resist.

As he walked toward Croisic, to engage the boatmen, fears came into Calyste's mind. Camille's speech foreshadowed something fatal, and he believed in the second sight of her maternal affection. When he returned, four hours later, very tired, and expecting to dine at Les Touches, he found Camille's maid

keeping watch over the door, to tell him that neither her mistress nor the marquise could receive him that evening. Calyste, much surprised, wished to question her, but she bade him hastily good-night and closed the door.

Six o'clock was striking on the steeple of Guérande as Calyste entered his own house, where Mariotte gave him his belated dinner; after which, he played *mouche* in gloomy meditation. These alternations of joy and gloom, happiness and unhappiness, the extinction of hopes succeeding the apparent certainty of being loved, bruised and wounded the young soul which had flown so high on outstretched wings that the fall was dreadful.

"Does anything trouble you, my Calyste?" said his mother.

"Nothing," he replied, looking at her with eyes from which the light of the soul and the fire of love were withdrawn.

It is not hope, but despair, which gives the measure of our ambitions. The finest poems of hope are sung in secret, but grief appears without a veil.

"Calyste, you are not nice," said Charlotte, after vainly attempting upon him those little provincial witcheries which degenerate usually into teasing.

"I am tired," he said, rising, and bidding the company good-night.

"Calyste is much changed," remarked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"We haven't beautiful dresses trimmed with lace; we don't shake our sleeves like this, or twist our bodies like that; we don't know how to give sidelong

glances, and turn our eyes," said Charlotte, mimicking the air, and attitude, and the glances of the marquise. "We have n't that head voice, nor the interesting little cough, *heu! heu!* which sounds like the sigh of a spook; we have the misfortune of being healthy and robust, and of loving our friends without coquetry; and when we look at them, we don't pretend to stick a dart into them, or to watch them slyly; we can't bend our heads like a weeping willow, just to look the more interesting when we raise them — this way."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël could not help laughing at her niece's gesture; but neither the chevalier nor the baron paid any heed to this truly provincial satire against Paris.

"But the Marquise de Rochefide is a very handsome woman," said the old maid.

"My dear," said the baroness to her husband, "I happen to know that she is going over to Croisic to-morrow. Let us walk on the jetty; I should like to see her."

While Calyste was racking his brains to imagine what could have closed the doors of Les Touches to him, a scene was passing between Camille and Béatrix which was to have its influence on the events of the morrow.

Calyste's last letter had stirred in Madame de Rochefide's heart emotions hitherto unknown to it. Women are not often the object of a love so young, guileless, sincere, and unconditional as that of this youth, this child. Béatrix had loved more than she had been loved. After being all her life a slave, she suddenly felt an inexplicable desire to be a tyrant.

But, in the midst of her pleasure, as she read and re-read the letter, she was pierced through and through with a cruel idea.

What were Calyste and Camille doing together ever since Claude Vignon's departure? If, as Calyste said, he did not love Camille, and if Camille knew it, how did they employ their mornings, and why were they alone together? Memory suddenly flashed into her mind, in answer to these questions, certain speeches of Camille; a grinning devil seemed to show her, as in a magic mirror, the portrait of that heroic woman, with certain gestures, certain aspects, which suddenly enlightened her. What! instead of being her equal, was she crushed by Félicité? instead of over-reaching her, was she being over-reached herself? was she only a toy, a pleasure, which Camille was giving to her child, whom she loved with an extraordinary passion that was free from all vulgarity?

To a woman like Béatrix this thought came like a thunder-clap. She went over in her mind minutely the history of the past week. In a moment the part which Camille was playing, and her own, unrolled themselves to their fullest extent before her eyes; she felt horribly belittled. In her fury of jealous anger, she fancied she could see in Camille's conduct an intention of vengeance against Conti. Was the hidden wrath of the past two years really acting upon the present moment?

Once on the path of these doubts and suppositions, Béatrix did not pause. She walked up and down her room, driven to rapid motion by the impetuous movements of her soul, sitting down now and then, and

trying to decide upon a course, but unable to do so. And thus she remained, a prey to indecision until the dinner hour, when she rose hastily, and went downstairs without dressing. No sooner did Camille see her, than she felt that a crisis had come. Béatrix, in her morning gown, with a chilling air and a taciturn manner, indicated to an observer as keen as Maupin the coming hostilities of an embittered heart.

Camille instantly left the room and gave the order which so astonished Calyste; she feared that he might arrive in the midst of the quarrel, and she determined to be alone, without witnesses, in fighting this duel of deception on both sides. Béatrix, without an auxiliary, would infallibly succumb. Camille well knew the barrenness of that soul, the pettiness of that pride, to which she had justly applied the epithet of obstinate.

The dinner was gloomy. Camille was gentle and kind; she felt herself the superior being. Béatrix was hard and cutting; she felt she was being managed like a child. During dinner the battle began with glances, gestures, half-spoken sentences, — not enough to enlighten the servants, but enough to prepare an observer for the coming storm. When the time to go upstairs came, Camille offered her arm maliciously to Béatrix, who pretended not to see it, and sprang up the stairway alone. When coffee had been served Mademoiselle des Touches said to the footman, “You may go,” — a brief sentence, which served as a signal for the combat.

“The novels you make, my dear, are more dangerous than those you write,” said the marquise.

“They have one advantage, however,” replied Camille, lighting a cigarette.

“What is that?” asked Béatrix.

“They are unpublished, my angel.”

“Is the one in which you are putting me to be turned into a book?”

“I’ve no fancy for the rôle of *Œdipus*; I know you have the wit and beauty of a sphinx, but don’t propound conundrums. Speak out, plainly, my dear Béatrix.”

“When, in order to make a man happy, amuse him, please him, and save him from ennui, we allow the devil to help us —”

“That man would reproach us later for our efforts on his behalf, and would think them prompted by the genius of depravity,” said Camille, taking the cigarette from her lips to interrupt her friend.

“He forgets the love which carried us away, and is our sole justification — but that’s the way of men, they are all unjust and ungrateful,” continued Béatrix. “Women among themselves know each other; they know how proud and noble their own minds are, and, let us frankly say so, how virtuous! But, Camille, I have just recognized the truth of certain criticisms upon your nature, of which you have sometimes complained. My dear, you have something of the man about you; you behave like a man; nothing restrains you; if you have n’t all a man’s advantages, you have a man’s spirit in all your ways; and you share his contempt for women. I have no reason, my dear, to be satisfied with you, and I am too frank to hide my dissatisfaction. No one has ever given or ever will

give, perhaps, so cruel a wound to my heart as that from which I am now suffering. If you are not a woman in love, you are one in vengeance. It takes a woman of genius to discover the most sensitive spot of all in another woman's delicacy. I am talking now of Calyste, and the trickery, my dear, — that is the word, — *trickery*, — you have employed against me. To what depths have you descended, Camille Maupin! and why?"

"More and more sphinx-like!" said Camille, smiling.

"You want me to fling myself at Calyste's head; but I am still too young for that sort of thing. To me, love is sacred; love is love with all its emotions, jealousies, and despotisms. I am not an author; it is impossible for me to see ideas where the heart feels sentiments."

"You think yourself capable of loving foolishly!" said Camille. "Make yourself easy on that score; you still have plenty of sense. My dear, you calumniate yourself; I assure you that your nature is cold enough to enable your head to judge of every action of your heart."

The marquise colored high; she darted a look of hatred, a venomous look, at Camille, and found, without searching, the sharpest arrows in her quiver. Camille smoked composedly as she listened to a furious tirade, which rang with such cutting insults that we do not reproduce it here. Béatrix, irritated by the calmness of her adversary, condescended even to personalities on Camille's age.

"Is that all?" said Félicité, when Béatrix paused,

letting a cloud of smoke exhale from her lips. "Do you love Calyste?"

"No; of course not."

"So much the better," replied Camille. "I do love him — far too much for my peace of mind. He may, perhaps, have had a passing fancy for you; for you are, you know, enchantingly fair, while I am as black as a crow; you are slim and willowy, while I have a portly dignity; in short, you are *young!* — that's the final word, and you have not spared it to me. You have abused your advantages as a woman against me. I have done my best to prevent what has now happened. However little of a woman you may think me, I am woman enough, my dear, not to allow a rival to triumph over me unless I choose to help her." (This remark, made in apparently the most innocent manner, cut the marquise to the heart). "You take me for a very silly person if you believe all that Calyste tries to make you think of me. I am neither so great nor so small; I am a woman, and very much of a woman. Come, put off your grand airs, and give me your hand!" continued Camille, taking Madame de Rochefide's hand. "You do not love Calyste, you say; that is true, is it not? Don't be angry, therefore; be hard, and cold, and stern to him to-morrow; he will end by submitting to his fate, especially after certain little reproaches which I mean to make to him. Still, Calyste is a Breton, and very persistent; if he should continue to pay court to you, tell me frankly, and I will lend you my little country house near Paris, where you will find all the comforts of life, and where Conti can come out and see you. You

said just now that Calyste calumniated me. Good heavens! what of that? The purest love lies twenty times a day; its deceptions only prove its strength."

Camille's face wore an air of such superb disdain that the marquise grew fearful and anxious. She knew not how to answer. Camille dealt her a last blow.

"I am more confiding and less bitter than you," she said. "I don't suspect you of attempting to cover by a quarrel a secret injury, which would compromise my very life. You know me; I shall never survive the loss of Calyste, but I must lose him sooner or later. Still, Calyste loves me now; of that I am sure."

"Here is what he answered to a letter of mine, urging him to be true to you," said Béatrix, holding out Calyste's last letter.

Camille took it and read it; but as she read it, her eyes filled with tears; and presently she wept as women weep in their bitterest sorrows.

"My God!" she said, "how he loves her! I shall die without being understood — or loved," she added.

She sat for a few moments with her head leaning against the shoulder of her companion; her grief was genuine; she felt to the very core of her being the same terrible blow which the Baronne du Guénic had received in reading that letter.

"Do you love him?" she said, straightening herself up, and looking fixedly at Béatrix. "Have you that infinite worship for him which triumphs over all pains, survives contempt, betrayal, the certainty that he will never love you? Do you love him for himself, and for the very joy of loving him?"

"Dear friend," said the marquise, tenderly, "be happy, be at peace; I will leave this place to-morrow."

"No, do not go; he loves you, I see that. Well, I love him so much that I could not endure to see him wretched and unhappy. Still, I had formed plans for him, projects; but if he loves you, all is over."

"And I love him, Camille," said the marquise, with a sort of *nuiveté*, and coloring.

"You love him, and yet you cast him off!" cried Camille. "Ah! that is not loving; you do not love him."

"I don't know what fresh virtue he has roused in me, but certainly he has made me ashamed of my own self," said Béatrix. "I would I were virtuous and free, that I might give him something better than the dregs of a heart and the weight of my chains. I do not want a hampered destiny either for him or for myself."

"Cold brain!" exclaimed Camille, with a sort of horror. "To love and calculate!"

"Call it what you like," said Béatrix, "but I will not spoil his life, or hang like a millstone round his neck, to become an eternal regret to him. If I cannot be his wife, I shall not be his mistress. He has — you will laugh at me? No? Well, then, he has purified me."

Camille cast on Béatrix the most sullen, savage look that female jealousy ever cast upon a rival.

"On that ground, I believed I stood alone," she said. "Béatrix, those words of yours must separate us forever; we are no longer friends. Here begins a terrible conflict between us. I tell you now: you will either succumb or fly."

So saying, Camille bounded into her room, after showing her face, which was that of a maddened lioness, to the astonished Béatrix. Then she raised the portière and looked in again.

“Do you intend to go to Croisic to-morrow,” she asked.

“Certainly,” replied the marquise, proudly. “I shall not fly, and I shall not succumb.”

“I play above board,” replied Camille; “I shall write to Conti.”

Béatrix became as white as the gauze of her scarf.

“We are staking our lives on this game,” she replied, not knowing what to say or do.

The violent passions roused by this scene between the two women calmed down during the night. Both argued with their own minds and returned to those treacherously temporizing courses which are so attractive to the majority of women, — an excellent system between men and women, but fatally unsafe among women alone. In the midst of this tumult of their souls Mademoiselle des Touches had listened to that great Voice whose counsels subdue the strongest will; Béatrix heard only the promptings of worldly wisdom; she feared the contempt of society.

Thus Félicité’s last deception succeeded; Calysté’s blunder was repaired, but a fresh indiscretion might be fatal to him.

XIV.

AN EXCURSION TO CROÏSIC.

It was now the end of August, and the sky was magnificently clear. Near the horizon the sea had taken, as it is wont to do in southern climates, a tint of molten silver; on the shore it rippled in tiny waves. A sort of glowing vapor, an effect of the rays of the sun falling plumb upon the sands, produced an atmosphere like that of the tropics. The salt shone up like bunches of white violets on the surface of the marsh. The patient *paludiers*, dressed in white to resist the action of the sun, had been from early morning at their posts, armed with long rakes. Some were leaning on the low mud-walls that divided the different holdings, whence they watched the process of this natural chemistry, known to them from childhood. Others were playing with their wives and children. Those green dragons, otherwise called custom-house officers, were tranquilly smoking their pipes.

There was something foreign, perhaps oriental, about the scene; at any rate a Parisian suddenly transported thither would never have supposed himself in France. The baron and baroness, who had made a pretext of coming to see how the salt harvest throve, were on the jetty, admiring the silent landscape, where the sea alone sounded the moan of her waves at regular

intervals, where boats and vessels tracked a vast expanse, and the girdle of green earth richly cultivated, produced an effect that was all the more charming because so rare on the desolate shores of ocean.

“ Well, my friends, I wanted to see the marshes of Guérande once more before I die,” said the baron to the *paludiers*, who had gathered about the entrance of the marshes to salute him.

“ Can a Guénic die?” said one of them.

Just then the party from Les Touches arrived through the narrow pathway. The marquise walked first alone; Calyste and Camille followed arm-in-arm. Gasselín brought up the rear.

“ There are my father and mother,” said the young man to Camille.

The marquise stopped short. Madame du Guénic felt the most violent repulsion at the appearance of Béatrix, although the latter was dressed to much advantage. A Leghorn hat with wide brims and a wreath of blue bells, her crimped hair fluffy beneath it, a gown of some gray woollen stuff, and a blue sash with floating ends gave her the air of a princess disguised as a milkmaid.

“ She has no heart,” thought the baroness.

“ Mademoiselle,” said Calyste to Camille, “ this is Madame du Guénic, and this is my father.” Then he said turning to the baron and baroness, “ Mademoiselle des Touches, and Madame la Marquise de Rochefide, *née* de Casteran, father.”

The baron bowed to Mademoiselle des Touches, who made a respectful bow, full of gratitude, to the baroness.

“That one,” thought Fanny, “really loves my boy; she seems to thank me for bringing him into the world.”

“I suppose you have come to see, as I have, whether the harvest is a good one. But I believe you have better reasons for doing so than I,” said the baron to Camille. “You have property here, I think, mademoiselle.”

“Mademoiselle is the largest of all the owners,” said one of the *paludiers* who were grouped about them, “and may God preserve her to us, for she’s a *good* lady.”

The two parties bowed and separated.

“No one would suppose Mademoiselle des Touches to be more than thirty,” said the baron to his wife. “She is very handsome. And Calyste prefers that haggard Parisian marquise to a sound Breton girl!”

“I fear he does,” replied the baroness.

A boat was waiting at the steps of the jetty, where the party embarked without a smile. The marquise was cold and dignified. Camille had lectured Calyste on his disobedience, explaining to him clearly how matters stood. Calyste, a prey to black despair, was casting glances at Béatrix in which anger and love struggled for the mastery. Not a word was said by any of them during the short passage from the jetty of Guérande to the extreme end of the port of Croisic, the point where the boats discharge the salt, which the peasant-women then bear away on their heads in huge earthen jars after the fashion of caryatides. These women go barefooted with very short petticoats. Many of them let the kerchiefs which cover their bosoms fly carelessly open. Some wear only shifts,

and are the more dignified; for the less clothing a woman wears, the more nobly modest is her bearing.

The little Danish vessel had just finished lading, therefore the landing of the two handsome ladies excited much curiosity among the female salt-carriers; and as much to avoid their remarks as to serve Calyste, Camille sprang forward toward the rocks, leaving him to follow with Béatrix, while Gasselin put a distance of some two hundred steps between himself and his master.

The peninsula of Croisic is flanked on the sea side by granite rocks the shapes of which are so strangely fantastic that they can only be appreciated by travellers who are in a position to compare them with other great spectacles of primeval Nature. Perhaps the rocks of Croisic have the same advantage over sights of that kind as that accorded to the road to the Grande Chartreuse over all other narrow valleys. Neither the coasts of Corsica, where the granite bulwark is split into strange reefs, nor those of Sardinia, where Nature is dedicated to grandiose and terrible effects, nor even the basaltic rocks of the northern seas can show a character so unique and so complete. Fancy has here amused itself by composing interminable arabesques where the most fantastic figures wind and twine. All forms are here. The imagination is at last fatigued by this vast gallery of abnormal shapes, where in stormy weather the sea makes rough assaults which have ended in polishing all ruggedness.

You will find under a naturally vaulted roof, of a boldness imitated from afar by Brunelleschi (for the greatest efforts of art are always the timid copying of effects of nature), a rocky hollow polished like a

marble bath-tub and floored with fine white sand, in which is four feet of tepid water where you can bathe without danger. You walk on, admiring the cool little coves sheltered by great portals; roughly carved, it is true, but majestic, like the Pitti palace, that other imitation of the whims of Nature. Curious features are innumerable; nothing is lacking that the wildest imagination could invent or desire.

There even exists a thing so rare on the rocky shores of ocean that this may be the solitary instance of it, — a large bush of box. This bush, the greatest curiosity of Croisic, where trees have never grown, is three miles distant from the harbor, on the point of rocks that runs out farthest into the sea. On this granite promontory, which rises to a height that neither the waves nor the spray can touch, even in the wildest weather, and faces southerly, diluvian caprice has constructed a hollow basin, which projects about four feet. Into this basin, or cleft, chance, possibly man, has conveyed enough vegetable earth for the growth of a box-plant, compact, well-nourished, and sown, no doubt, by birds. The shape of the roots would indicate to a botanist an existence of at least three hundred years. Above it the rock has been broken off abruptly. The natural convulsion which did this, the traces of which are ineffaceably written here, must have carried away the broken fragments of the granite I know not where.

The sea rushes in, meeting no reefs, to the foot of this cliff, which rises to a height of some four or five hundred feet; at its base lie several scattered rocks, just reaching the surface at high water, and describing

a semi-circle. It requires some nerve and resolution to climb to the summit of this little Gibraltar, the shape of which is nearly round, and from which a sudden gust of wind might precipitate the rash gazer into the sea, or, still more to be feared, upon the rocks.

This gigantic sentinel resembles the look-out towers of old castles, from which the inhabitants could look the country over and foresee attacks. Thence we see the clock towers and the arid fields of Croisic, with the sandy dunes, which injure cultivation, and stretch as far as Batz. A few old men declare that in days long past a fortress occupied the spot. The sardine-fishers have given the rock, which can be seen far out at sea, a name; but it is useless to write it here, its Breton consonants being as difficult to pronounce as to remember.

Calyste led Béatrix to this point, whence the view is magnificent, and where the natural sculpture of the granite is even more imposing to the spectator than the mass of the huge breastwork when seen from the sandy road which skirts the shore.

Is it necessary to explain why Camille had rushed away alone? Like some wounded wild animal, she longed for solitude, and went on and on, threading her way among the fissures and caves and little peaks of nature's fortress. Not to be hampered in climbing by women's clothing, she wore trousers with frilled edges, a short blouse, a peaked cap, and, by way of staff, she carried a riding-whip, for Camille has always had a certain vanity in her strength and her agility. Thus arrayed, she looked far handsomer than Béatrix. She wore also a little shawl of crimson

China crape, crossed on her bosom and tied behind, as they dress a child. For some time Béatrix and Calyste saw her flitting before them over the peaks and chasms like a ghost or vision; she was trying to still her inward sufferings by confronting some imaginary peril.

She was the first to reach the rock in which the box-bush grew. There she sat down in the shade of a granite projection, and was lost in thought. What could a woman like herself do with old age, having already drunk the cup of fame which all great talents, too eager to sip slowly the stupid pleasures of vanity, quaff at a single draught? She has since admitted that it was here — at this moment, and on this spot — that one of those singular reflections suggested by a mere nothing, by one of those chance accidents that seem nonsense to common minds, but which, to noble souls, do sometimes open vast depths of thought, decided her to take the extraordinary step by which she was to part forever from social life.

She drew from her pocket a little box, in which she had put, in case of thirst, some strawberry lozenges; she now ate several; and as she did so, the thought crossed her mind that the strawberries, which existed no longer, lived nevertheless in their qualities. Was it not so with ourselves? The ocean before her was an image of the infinite. No great spirit can face the infinite, admitting the immortality of the soul, without the conviction of a future of holiness. The thought filled her mind. How petty then seemed the part that she was playing! there was no real greatness in giving Béatrix to Calyste! So thinking, she felt the earthly

woman die within her, and the true woman, the noble and angelic being, veiled until now by flesh, arose in her place. Her great mind, her knowledge, her attainments, her false loves had brought her face to face with what? Ah! who would have thought it?—with the bounteous mother, the comforter of troubled spirits, with the Roman Church, ever kind to repentance, poetic to poets, childlike with children, and yet so profound, so full of mystery to anxious, restless minds that they can burrow there and satisfy all longings, all questionings, all hopes. She cast her eyes, as it were, upon the strangely devious way—like the tortuous rocky path before her—over which her love for Calyste had led her. Ah! Calyste was indeed a messenger from heaven, her divine conductor! She had stifled her earthly love, and a divine love had come of it.

After walking for some distance in silence, Calyste could not refrain, on a remark of Béatrix about the grandeur of the ocean, so unlike the smiling beauty of the Mediterranean, from comparing in depth, purity, extent, unchanging and eternal duration, that ocean with his love.

“It is met by a rock!” said Béatrix, laughing.

“When you speak thus,” he answered, with a sublime look, “I hear you, I see you, and I can summon to my aid the patience of the angels; but when I am alone, you would pity me if you could see me then. My mother weeps for my suffering.”

“Listen to me, Calyste; we must put an end to all this,” said the marquise, gazing down upon the sandy road. “Perhaps we have now reached the only propi-

tious place to say these things, for never in my life did I see nature more in keeping with my thoughts. I have seen Italy, where all things tell of love; I have seen Switzerland, where all is cool and fresh, and tells of happiness, — the happiness of labor; where the verdure, the tranquil waters, the smiling slopes, are oppressed by the snow-topped Alps; but I have never seen anything that so depicts the burning barrenness of my life as that little arid plain down there, dried by the salt sea winds, corroded by the spray, where a fruitless agriculture tries to struggle against the will of that great ocean. There, Calyste, you have an image of this Béatrix. Don't cling to it. I love you, but I will never be yours in any way whatever, for I have the sense of my inward desolation. Ah! you do not know how cruel I am to myself in speaking thus to you. No, you shall never see your idol diminished; she shall never fall from the height at which you have placed her. I now have a horror of any love which disregards the world and religion. I shall remain in my present bonds; I shall be that sandy plain we see before us, without fruit or flowers or verdure."

"But if you are abandoned?" said Calyste.

"Then I should beg my pardon of the man I have offended. I will never run the risk of taking a happiness I know would quickly end."

"End!" cried Calyste.

The marquise stopped the passionate speech into which her lover was about to launch, by repeating the word "End!" in a tone that silenced him.

This opposition roused in the young man one of those mute inward furies known only to those who

love without hope. They walked on several hundred steps in total silence, looking neither at the sea, nor the rocks, nor the plain of Croisic.

“I would make you happy,” said Calyste.

“All men begin by promising that,” she answered, “and they end by abandonment and disgust. I have no reproach to cast on him to whom I shall be faithful. He made me no promises; I went to him; but my only means of lessening my fault is to make it eternal.”

“Say rather, madame, that you feel no love for me. I, who love you, I know that love cannot argue; it is itself; it sees nothing else. There is no sacrifice I will not make to you; command it, and I will do the impossible. He who despised his mistress for flinging her glove among the lions, and ordering him to bring it back to her, did not *love!* He denied your right to test our hearts, and to yield yourselves only to our utmost devotion. I will sacrifice to you my family, my name, my future.”

“But what an insult in that word ‘sacrifice’!” she said, in reproachful tones, which made poor Calyste feel the folly of his speech.

None but women who truly love, or inborn coquettes, know how to use a word as a point from which to make a spring.

“You are right,” said Calyste, letting fall a tear; “that word can only be said of the cruel struggles which you ask of me.”

“Hush!” said Béatrix, struck by an answer in which, for the first time, Calyste had really made her feel his love. “I have done wrong enough; tempt me no more.”

At this moment they had reached the base of the rock on which grew the plant of box. Calyste felt a thrill of delight as he helped the marquise to climb the steep ascent to the summit, which she wished to reach. To the poor lad it was a precious privilege to hold her up, to make her lean upon him, to feel her tremble; she had need of him. This unlooked-for pleasure turned his head; he saw nought else but Béatrix, and he clasped her round the waist.

“What!” she said, with an imposing air.

“Will you never be mine?” he demanded, in a voice that was choked by the tumult of his blood.

“Never, my friend,” she replied. “I can only be to you a Béatrix, — a dream. But is not that a sweet and tender thing? We shall have no bitterness, no grief, no repentance.”

“Will you return to Conti?”

“I must.”

“You shall never belong to any man!” cried Calyste, pushing her from him with frenzied violence.

He listened for her fall, intending to spring after her, but he heard only a muffled sound, the tearing of some stuff, and then the thud of a body falling on the ground. Instead of being flung head foremost down the precipice, Béatrix had only slipped some eight or ten feet into the cavity where box-bush grew; but she might from there have rolled down into the sea if her gown had not caught upon a point of rock, and by tearing slowly lowered the weight of her body upon the bush.

Mademoiselle des Touches, who saw the scene, was unable in her horror to cry out, but she signed to Gas-

selin to come. Calyste was leaning forward with an expression of savage curiosity; he saw the position in which Béatrix lay, and he shuddered. Her lips moved, — she seemed to be praying; in fact, she thought she was about to die, for she felt the bush beginning to give way. With the agility which danger gives to youth, Calyste slid down to the ledge below the bush, where he was able to grasp the marquise and hold her, although at the risk of their both sliding down into the sea. As he held her, he saw that she had fainted; but in that aerial spot he could fancy her all his, and his first emotion was that of pleasure.

“Open your eyes,” he said, “and forgive me; we will die together.”

“Die?” she said, opening her eyes and unclosing her pallid lips.

Calyste welcomed that word with a kiss, and felt the marquise tremble under it convulsively, with passionate joy. At that instant Gasselin’s hob-nailed shoes sounded on the rock above them. The old Breton was followed by Camille, and together they sought for some means of saving the lovers.

“There’s but one way, mademoiselle,” said Gasselin. “I must slide down there, and they can climb on my shoulders, and you must pull them up.”

“And you?” said Camille.

The man seemed surprised that he should be considered in presence of the danger to his young master.

“You must go to Croisie and fetch a ladder,” said Camille.

Béatrix asked in a feeble voice to be laid down, and

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Albert Fourie

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Albert Fourie
Procède Goupi

Calyste placed her on the narrow space between the bush and its background of rock.

"I saw you, Calyste," said Camille from above. "Whether Béatrix lives or dies, remember that this must be an accident."

"She will hate me," he said, with moistened eyes.

"She will adore you," replied Camille. "But this puts an end to our excursion. We must get her back to Les Touches. Had she been killed, Calyste, what would have become of you?"

"I should have followed her."

"And your mother?" Then, after a pause, she added, feebly, "and me?"

Calyste was deadly pale; he stood with his back against the granite motionless and silent. Gasselin soon returned from one of the little farms scattered through the neighborhood, bearing a ladder which he had borrowed. By this time Béatrix had recovered a little strength. The ladder being placed, she was able, by the help of Gasselin, who lowered Camille's red shawl till she could grasp it, to reach the round top of the rock, where the Breton took her in his arms and carried her to the shore as though she were an infant.

"I should not have said no to death — but suffering!" she murmured to Félicité, in a feeble voice.

The weakness, in fact the complete prostration, of the marquise obliged Camille to have her taken to the farmhouse from which the ladder had been borrowed. Calyste, Gasselin, and Camille took off what clothes they could spare and laid them on the ladder, making a sort of litter on which they carried Béatrix. The

farmers gave her a bed. Gasselin then went to the place where the carriage was awaiting them, and, taking one of the horses, rode to Croisic to obtain a doctor, telling the boatman to row to the landing-place that was nearest to the farmhouse.

Calyste, sitting on a stool, answered only by motions of the head, and rare monosyllables when spoken to; Camille's uneasiness, roused for Béatrix, was still further excited by Calyste's unnatural condition. When the physician arrived, and Béatrix was bled, she felt better, began to talk, and consented to embark; so that by five o'clock they reached the jetty at Guérande, whence she was carried to Les Touches. The news of the accident had already spread through that lonely and almost uninhabited region with incredible rapidity.

Calyste passed the night at Les Touches, sitting at the foot of Béatrix's bed, in company with Camille. The doctor from Guérande had assured them that on the following day a little stiffness would be all that remained of the accident. Across the despair of Calyste's heart there came a gleam of joy. He was there, at her feet; he could watch her sleeping or waking; he might study her pallid face and all its expressions. Camille smiled bitterly as her keen mind recognized in Calyste the symptoms of a passion such as man can feel but once, — a passion which dyes his soul and his faculties by mingling with the fountain of his life at a period when neither thoughts nor cares distract or oppose the inward working of this emotion. She saw that Calyste would never, could never see the real woman that was in Béatrix.

And with what guileless innocence the young Breton allowed his thoughts to be read! When he saw the beautiful green eyes of the sick woman turned to him, expressing a mixture of love, confusion, and even mischief, he colored, and turned away his head.

“Did I not say truly, Calyste, that you men promised happiness, and ended by flinging us down a precipice?”

When he heard this little jest, said in sweet, caressing tones which betrayed a change of heart in *Béatrix*, Calyste knelt down, took her moist hand which she yielded to him, and kissed it humbly.

“You have the right to reject my love forever,” he said, “and I, I have no right to say one word to you.”

“Ah!” cried Camille, seeing the expression on *Béatrix*’s face and comparing it with that obtained by her diplomacy, “love has a wit of its own, wiser than that of all the world! Take your composing-draught, my dear friend, and go to sleep.”

That night, spent by Calyste beside *Mademoiselle des Touches*, who read a book of theological mysticism while Calyste read “*Indiana*,” — the first work of Camille’s celebrated rival, in which is the captivating image of a young man loving with idolatry and devotion, with mysterious tranquillity and for all his life, a woman placed in the same false position as *Béatrix* (a book which had a fatal influence upon him), — that night left ineffaceable marks upon the heart of the poor young fellow, whom *Félicité* soothed with the assurance that unless a woman were a monster she must be flattered in all her vanities by being the object of such a crime.

“You would never have flung *me* into the water,” said Camille, brushing away a tear.

Toward morning, Calyste, worn-out with emotion, fell asleep in his arm-chair; and the marquise in her turn, watched his charming face, paler by his feelings and his vigil of love. She heard him murmur her name as he slept.

“He loves while sleeping,” she said to Camille.

“We must send him home,” said Félicité, waking him.

No one was anxious at the hôtel du Guénic, for Mademoiselle des Touches had written a line to the baroness telling her of the accident.

Calyste returned to dinner at Les Touches and found Béatrix up and dressed, but pale, feeble, and languid. No longer was there any harshness in her words or any coldness in her looks. After this evening, filled with music by Camille, who went to her piano to leave Calyste free to take and press the hands of Béatrix (though both were unable to speak), no storms occurred at Les Touches. Félicité completely effaced herself.

Cold, fragile, thin, hard women like Madame de Rochefide, women whose necks turn in a manner to give them a vague resemblance to the feline race, have souls of the same pale tint as their light eyes, green or gray; and to melt them, to fuse those blocks of stone it needs a thunderbolt. To Béatrix, Calyste's fury of love and his mad action came as the thunderbolt that nought resists, which changes all natures, even the most stubborn. She felt herself inwardly humbled; a true, pure love bathed her heart with its soft and limpid warmth. She breathed a sweet and genial at-

mosphere of feelings hitherto unknown to her, by which she felt herself magnified, elevated; in fact she rose into that heaven where Bretons throughout all time have placed the Woman. She relished with delight the respectful adoration of the youth, whose happiness cost her little, for a gesture, a look, a word was enough to satisfy him. The value which Calyste's heart gave to these trifles touched her exceedingly; to hold her gloved hand was more to that young angel than the possession of her whole person to the man who ought to have been faithful to her. What a contrast between them!

Few women could resist such constant deification. Béatrix felt herself sure of being obeyed and understood. She might have asked Calyste to risk his life for the slightest of her caprices, and he would never have reflected for a moment. This consciousness gave her a certain noble and imposing air. She saw love on the side of its grandeur; and her heart sought for some foothold on which she might remain forever the loftiest of women in the eyes of her young lover, over whom she now wished her power to be eternal.

Her coquetries became the more persistent because she felt within herself a certain weakness. She played the invalid for a whole week with charming hypocrisy. Again and again she walked about the velvet turf which lay between the house and garden leaning on Calyste's arm in languid dependence.

"Ah! my dear, you are taking him a long journey in a small space," said Mademoiselle des Touches one day.

Before the excursion to Croisic, the two women were

discoursing one evening about love, and laughing at the different ways that men adopted to declare it; admitting to themselves that the cleverest men, and naturally the least loving, did not like to wander in the labyrinths of sentimentality and went straight to the point, — in which perhaps they were right; for the result was that those who loved most deeply and reservedly were, for a time at least, ill-treated.

“ They go to work like La Fontaine, when he wanted to enter the Academy,” said Camille.

Madame de Rochefide had unbounded power to restrain Calyste within the limits where she meant to keep him; it sufficed her to remind him by a look or gesture of his horrible violence on the rocks. The eyes of her poor victim would fill with tears, he was silent, swallowing down his prayers, his arguments, his sufferings with a heroism that would certainly have touched any other woman. She finally brought him by her infernal coquetry to such a pass that he went one day to Camille imploring her advice.

Béatrix, armed with Calyste’s own letter, quoted the passage in which he said that to love was the first happiness, that of being loved came later; and she used that axiom to restrain his passion to the limits of respectful idolatry, which pleased her well. She liked to feel her soul caressed by those sweet hymns of praise and adoration which nature suggests to youth; in them is so much artless art; such innocent seduction is in their cries, their prayers, their exclamations, their pledges of themselves in the promissory notes which they offer on the future; to all of which Béatrix was very careful to give no definite answer.

Yes, she heard him; but she doubted! Love was not yet the question; what he asked of her was permission to love. In fact, that was all that the poor lad really asked for; his mind still clung to the strongest side of love, the spiritual side. But the woman who is firmest in words is often the feeblest in action. It is strange that Calyste, having seen the progress his suit had made by pushing Béatrix into the sea, did not continue to urge it violently. But love in young men is so ecstatic and religious that their inmost desire is to win its fruition through moral conviction. In that is the sublimity of their love.

Nevertheless the day came when the Breton, driven to desperation, complained to Camille of Béatrix's conduct.

"I meant to cure you by making you quickly understand her," replied Mademoiselle des Touches; "but you have spoiled all. Ten days ago you were her master; to-day, my poor boy, you are her slave. You will never have the strength now to do as I advise."

"What ought I to do?"

"Quarrel with her on the ground of her hardness. A woman is always over-excited when she discusses; let her be angry and ill-treat you, and then stay away; do not return to Les Touches till she herself recalls you."

In all extreme illness there is a moment when the patient is willing to accept the cruellest remedy and submits to the most horrible operation. Calyste had reached that point. He listened to Camille's advice and stayed at home two whole days; but on the third he was scratching at Béatrix's door to let her know that he and Camille were waiting breakfast for her.

“Another chance lost!” Camille said to him when she saw him re-appear so weakly.

During his two days’ absence, Béatrix had frequently looked through the window which opens on the road to Guérande. When Camille found her doing so, she talked of the effect produced by the gorse along the roadway, the golden blooms of which were dazzling in the September sunshine.

The marquise kept Camille and Calyste waiting long for breakfast; and the delay would have been significant to any eyes but those of Calyste, for when she did appear, her dress showed an evident intention to fascinate him and prevent another absence. After breakfast she went to walk with him in the garden and filled his simple heart with joy by expressing a wish to go again to that rock where she had so nearly perished.

“Will you go with me alone?” asked Calyste, in a troubled voice.

“If I refused to do so,” she replied, “I should give you reason to suppose I thought you dangerous. Alas! as I have told you again and again I belong to another, and I must be his only; I chose him knowing nothing of love. The fault was great, and bitter is my punishment.”

When she talked thus, her eyes moist with the scanty tears shed by that class of women, Calyste was filled with a compassion that reduced his fiery ardor; he adored her then as he did a Madonna. We have no more right to require different characters to be alike in the expression of feelings than we have to expect the same fruits from different trees. Béatrix

was at this moment undergoing an inward struggle; she hesitated between herself and Calyste, — between the world she still hoped to re-enter, and the young happiness offered to her; between a second and an unpardonable love, and social rehabilitation. She began, therefore, to listen, without even acted displeasure, to the talk of the youth's blind passion; she allowed his soft pity to soothe her. Several times she had been moved to tears as she listened to Calyste's promises; and she suffered him to commiserate her for being bound to an evil genius, a man as false as Conti. More than once she related to him the misery and anguish she had gone through in Italy, when she first became aware that she was not alone in Conti's heart. On this subject Camille had fully informed Calyste and given him several lectures on it, by which he profited:

“I,” he said, “will love you only, you absolutely. I have no triumphs of art, no applause of crowds stirred by my genius to offer you; my only talent is to love you; my honor, my pride are in your perfections. No other woman can have merit in my eyes; you have no odious rivalry to fear. You are misconceived and wronged, but I know you, and for every misconception, for every wrong, I will make you feel my comprehension day by day.”

She listened to such speeches with bowed head, allowing him to kiss her hands, and admitting silently but gracefully that she was indeed an angel misunderstood.

“I am too humiliated,” she would say; “my past has robbed the future of all security.”

It was a glorious day for Calyste when, arriving at Les Touches at seven in the morning, he saw from afar Béatrix at a window watching for him, and wearing the same straw hat she had worn on the memorable day of their first excursion. For a moment he was dazzled and giddy. These little things of passion magnify the world itself. It may be that only Frenchwomen possess the art of such scenic effects; they owe it to the grace of their minds; they know how to put into sentiment as much of the picturesque as the particular sentiment can bear without a loss of vigor or of force.

Ah! how lightly she rested on Calyste's arm! Together they left Les Touches by the garden-gate which opens on the dunes. Béatrix thought the sands delightful; she spied the hardy little plants with rose-colored flowers that grew there, and she gathered a quantity to mix with the Chartreux pansies which also grow in that arid desert, dividing them significantly with Calyste, to whom those flowers and their foliage were to be henceforth an eternal and dreadful relic.

“We'll add a bit of box,” she said smiling.

They sat some time together on the jetty, and Calyste, while waiting for the boat to come over, told her of his juvenile act on the day of her arrival.

“I knew of your little escapade,” she said, “and it was the cause of my sternness to you that first night.”

During their walk Madame de Rochefide had the lightly jesting tone of a woman who loves, together with a certain tenderness and abandonment of manner. Calyste had reason to think himself beloved. But

when, wandering along the shore beneath the rocks, they came upon one of those charming creeks where the waves deposit the most extraordinary mosaic of brilliant pebbles, and they played there like children gathering the prettiest, when Calyste at the summit of happiness asked her plainly to fly with him to Ireland, she resumed her dignified and distant air, asked for his arm, and continued their walk in silence to what she called her Tarpeian rock.

“My friend,” she said, mounting with slow steps the magnificent block of granite of which she was making for herself a pedestal, “I have not the courage to conceal what you are to me. For ten years I have had no happiness comparable to that which we have just enjoyed together, searching for shells among those rocks, exchanging pebbles of which I shall make a necklace more precious far to me than if it were made of the finest diamonds. I have been once more a little girl, a child, such as I was at fourteen or sixteen — when I was worthy of you. The love that I have had the happiness to inspire in your heart has raised me in my own eyes. Understand those words to their magical extent. You have made me the proudest and happiest of my sex, and you will live longer in my remembrance, perhaps, than I in yours.”

At this moment they reached the summit of the rock, whence they saw the vast ocean on one side and Brittany on the other, with its golden isles, its feudal towers, and its gorse. Never did any woman stand on a finer scene to make a great avowal.

“But,” she continued, “I do not belong to myself; I am more bound by my own will than I was by the

law. You must be punished for my misdeed, but be satisfied to know that we suffer together. Dante never saw his Beatrice again ; Petrarch never possessed his Laura. Such disasters fall on none but noble souls. But, if I should be abandoned, if I fall lower yet into shame and ignominy, if your Béatrix is cruelly misjudged by the world she loathes, if indeed she is the lowest of women, — then, my child, my adored child,” she said, taking his hand, “to you she will still be first of all; you will know that she rises to heaven as she leans on you; but then, my friend,” she added, giving him an intoxicating look, “then if you wish to cast her down do not fail of your blow; after your love, death!”.

Calyste clasped her round the waist and pressed her to his heart. As if to confirm her words Madame de Rochefide laid a tender, timid kiss upon his brow. Then they turned and walked slowly back; talking together like those who have a perfect comprehension of each other, — she, thinking she had gained a truce, he not doubting of his happiness; and both deceived. Calyste, from what Camille had told him, was confident that Conti would be enchanted to find an opportunity to part from Béatrix; Béatrix, yielding herself up to the vagueness of her position, looked to chance to arrange the future.

They reached Les Touches in the most delightful of all states of mind, entering by the garden gate, the key of which Calyste had taken with him. It was nearly six o'clock. The luscious odors, the warm atmosphere, the burnished rays of the evening sun were all in harmony with their feelings and their tender talk. Their

steps were taken in unison, — the gait of all lovers, — their movements told of the union of their thoughts. The silence that reigned about Les Touches was so profound that the noise which Calyste made in opening and shutting the gate must have echoed through the garden. As the two had said all to each other that could be said, and as their day's excursion, so filled with emotion, had physically tired them, they walked slowly, saying nothing.

Suddenly, at the turn of a path, Béatrix was seized with a horrible trembling, with that contagious horror which is caused by the sight of a snake, and which Calyste felt before he saw the cause of it. On a bench, beneath the branches of a weeping ash, sat Conti, talking with Camille Maupin.

XV.

CONTI.

THE inward and convulsive trembling of the marquise was more apparent than she wished it to be; a tragic drama developed at that moment in the souls of all present.

“You did not expect me so soon, I fancy,” said Conti, offering his arm to Béatrix.

The marquise could not avoid dropping Calyste’s arm and taking that of Conti. This ignoble transit, imperiously demanded, so dishonoring to the new love, overwhelmed Calyste who threw himself on the bench beside Camille, after exchanging the coldest of salutations with his rival. He was torn by conflicting emotions. Strong in the thought that Béatrix loved him, he wanted at first to fling himself upon Conti and tell him that Béatrix was his; but the violent trembling of the woman betraying how she suffered — for she had really paid the penalty of her faults in that one moment — affected him so deeply that he was dumb, struck like her with a sense of some implacable necessity.

Madame de Rochefide and Conti passed in front of the seat where Calyste had dropped beside Camille, and as she passed, the marquise looked at Camille, giving her one of those terrible glances in which

women have the art of saying all things. She avoided the eyes of Calyste and turned her attention to Conti, who appeared to be jesting with her.

“What will they say to each other?” Calyste asked of Camille.

“Dear child, you don’t know as yet the terrible rights which an extinguished love still gives to a man over a woman. Béatrix could not refuse to take his arm. He is, no doubt, joking her about her new love; he must have guessed it from your attitudes and the manner in which you approached us.”

“Joking her!” cried the impetuous youth, starting up.

“Be calm,” said Camille, “or you will lose the last chances that remain to you. If he wounds her self-love, she will crush him like a worm under her foot. But he is too astute for that; he will manage her with greater cleverness. He will seem not even to suppose that the proud Madame de Rochefide could betray him; *she* could never be guilty of such depravity as loving a man for the sake of his beauty. He will represent you to her as a child ambitious to have a marquise in love with him, and to make himself the arbiter of the fate of two women. In short, he will fire a broadside of malicious insinuations. Béatrix will then be forced to parry with false assertions and denials, which he will simply make use of to become once more her master.”

“Ah!” cried Calyste, “he does not love her. I would leave her free. True love means a choice made anew at every moment, confirmed from day to day. The morrow justifies the past, and swells the treasury

of our pleasures. Ah! why did he not stay away a little longer? A few days more and he would not have found her. What brought him back?"

"The jest of a journalist," replied Camille. "His opera, on the success of which he counted, has fallen flat. Some journalist, probably Claude Vignon, remarked in the foyer: 'It is hard to lose fame and mistress at the same moment,' and the speech cut him in all his vanities. Love based on petty sentiments is always pitiless. I have questioned him; but who can fathom a nature so false and so deceiving? He appeared to be weary of his troubles and his love,—in short, disgusted with life. He regrets having allied himself so publicly with the marquise, and made me, in speaking of his past happiness, a melancholy poem, which was somewhat too clever to be true. I think he hoped to worm out of me the secret of your love, in the midst of the joy he expected his flatteries to cause me."

"What else?" said Calyste, watching Béatrix and Conti, who were now coming towards them; but he listened no longer to Camille's words.

In talking with Conti, Camille had held herself prudently on the defensive; she had betrayed neither Calyste's secret nor that of Béatrix. The great artist was capable of treachery to every one, and Mademoiselle des Touches warned Calyste to distrust him.

"My dear friend," she said, "this is by far the most critical moment for you. You need caution and a sort of cleverness you do not possess; I am afraid you will let yourself be tricked by the most wily man I have ever known, and I can do nothing to help you."

The bell announced dinner. Conti offered his arm to Camille; Calyste gave his to Béatrix. Camille drew back to let the marquise pass, but the latter had found a moment in which to look at Calyste, and impress upon him, by putting her finger on her lips, the absolute necessity of discretion.

Conti was extremely gay during the dinner; perhaps this was only one way of probing Madame de Rochefide, who played her part extremely ill. If her conduct had been mere coquetry, she might have deceived even Conti; but her new love was real, and it betrayed her. The wily musician, far from adding to her embarrassment, pretended not to have perceived it. At dessert, he brought the conversation round to women, and lauded the nobility of their sentiments. Many a woman, he said, who might have been willing to abandon a man in prosperity, would sacrifice all to him in misfortune. Women had the advantage over men in constancy; nothing ever detached them from their first lover, to whom they clung as a matter of honor, unless he wounded them; they felt that a second love was unworthy of them, and so forth. His ethics were of the highest order; shedding incense on the altar where he knew that one heart at least, pierced by many a blow, was bleeding. Camille and Béatrix alone understood the bitterness of the sarcasms shot forth in the guise of eulogy. At times they both flushed scarlet, but they were forced to control themselves. When dinner was over, they took each other by the arm to return to Camille's salon, and, as if by mutual consent, they turned aside into the great salon, where they could be alone for an instant in the darkness.

“It is dreadful to let Conti ride over me rough-shod; and yet I can’t defend myself,” said Beatrix, in a low voice. “The galley-slave is always a slave to his chain-companion. I am lost; I must needs return to my galleys! And it is you, Camille, who have cast me there! Ah! you brought him back a day too soon, or a day too late. I recognize your infernal talent as author. Well, your revenge is complete, the finale perfect!”

“I may have told you that I would write to Conti, but to do it was another matter,” cried Camille. “I am incapable of such baseness. But you are unhappy, and I forgive the suspicion.”

“What will become of Calyste?” said the marquise, with naïve self-conceit.

“Then Conti carries you off, does he?” asked Camille.

“Ah! you think you triumph!” cried Béatrix.

Anger distorted her handsome face as she said those bitter words to Camille, who was trying to hide her satisfaction under a false expression of sympathy. Unfortunately, the sparkle in her eyes belied the sadness of her face, and Béatrix was learned in such deceptions. When, a few moments later, the two women were seated under a strong light on that divan where for the last three weeks so many comedies had been played, and where the secret tragedy of many thwarted passions had begun, they examined each other for the last time, and felt they were forever parted by an undying hatred.

“Calyste remains to you,” said Béatrix, looking into Camille’s eyes; “but I am fixed in his heart, and no woman can ever drive me out of it.”

Camille replied, with an inimitable tone of irony that struck the marquise to the heart, in the famous words of Mazarin's niece to Louis XIV., —

“You reign, you love, and you depart!”

Neither Camille nor Béatrix was conscious during this sharp and bitter scene of the absence of Conti and Calyste. The composer had remained at table with his rival, begging him to keep him company in finishing a bottle of champagne.

“We have something to say to each other,” added Conti, to prevent all refusal on the part of Calyste.

Placed as they both were, it was impossible for the young Breton to refuse this challenge.

“My dear friend,” said the composer, in his most caressing voice, as soon as the poor lad had drunk a couple of glasses of champagne, “we are both good fellows, and we can speak to each other frankly. I have not come here suspiciously. Béatrix loves me,” — this with a gesture of the utmost self-conceit — “but the truth is, I have ceased to love her. I am not here to carry her away with me, but to break off our relations, and to leave her the honors of the rupture. You are young; you don't yet know how useful it is to appear to be the victim when you are really the executioner. Young men spit fire and flame; they leave a woman with noise and fury; they often despise her, and they make her hate them. But wise men do as I am doing; they get themselves dismissed, assuming a mortified air, which leaves regret in the woman's heart and also a sense of her superiority. You don't yet know, luckily for you, how hampered men often are in their careers by the rash promises

which women are silly enough to accept when gallantry obliges us to make nooses to catch our happiness. We swear eternal faithfulness, and declare that we desire to pass our lives with them, and seem to await a husband's death impatiently. Let him die, and there are some provincial women obtuse or silly or malicious enough to say: 'Here am I, free at last.' The spent ball suddenly comes to life again, and falls plumb in the midst of our finest triumphs or our most carefully planned happiness. I have seen that you love Béatrix. I leave her therefore in a position where she loses nothing of her precious majesty; she will certainly coquet with you, if only to tease and annoy that angel of a Camille Maupin. Well, my dear fellow, take her, love her, you'll do me a great service; I want her to turn against me. I have been afraid of her pride and her virtue. Perhaps, in spite of my approval of the matter, it may take some time to effect this *chassez-croissez*. On such occasions the wisest plan is to take no step at all. I did, just now, as we walked about the lawn, attempt to let her see that I knew all, and was ready to congratulate her on her new happiness. Well, she was furious! At this moment I am desperately in love with the youngest and handsomest of our prima-donnas, Mademoiselle Falcon of the Grand Opera. I think of marrying her; yes, I have got as far as that. When you come to Paris you will see that I have changed a marquise for a queen."

Calyste, whose candid face revealed his satisfaction, admitted his love for Béatrix, which was all that Conti wanted to discover. There is no man in the

world, however *blasé* or depraved he may be, whose love will not flame up again the moment he sees it threatened by a rival. He may wish to leave a woman, but he will never willingly let her leave him. When a pair of lovers get to this extremity, both the man and the woman strive for priority of action, so deep is the wound to their vanity. Questioned by the composer, Calyste related all that had happened during the last three weeks at Les Touches, delighted to find that Conti, who concealed his fury under an appearance of charming good-humor, took it all in good part.

"Come, let us go upstairs," said the latter. "Women are so distrustful; those two will wonder how we can sit here together without tearing each other's hair out; they are even capable of coming down to listen. I'll serve you faithfully, my dear boy. You'll see me rough and jealous with the marquise; I shall seem to suspect her; there's no better way to drive a woman to betray you. You will be happy, and I shall be free. Seem to pity that angel for belonging to a man without delicacy; show her a tear—for you can weep, you are still young. I, alas! can weep no more; and that's a great advantage lost."

Calyste and Conti went up to Camille's salon. The composer, begged by his young rival to sing, gave them that greatest of musical masterpieces viewed as execution, the famous "*Pria che spunti l'aurora*," which Rubini himself never attempted without trembling, and which had often been Conti's triumph. Never was his singing more extraordinary than on

this occasion, when so many feelings were contending in his breast. Calyste was in ecstasy. As Conti sang the first words of the cavatina, he looked intently at the marquise, giving to those words a cruel signification which was fully understood. Camille, who accompanied him, guessed the order thus conveyed, which bowed the head of the luckless Béatrix. She looked at Calyste, and felt sure that the youth had fallen into some trap in spite of her advice. This conviction became certainty when the evidently happy Breton came up to bid Béatrix good-night, kissing her hand, and pressing it with a little air of happy confidence.

By the time Calyste had reached Guérande, the servants were packing Conti's travelling-carriage, and "by dawn," as the song had said, the composer was carrying Béatrix away with Camille's horses to the first relay. The morning twilight enabled Madame de Rochefide to see Guérande, its towers, whitened by the dawn, shining out upon the still dark sky. Melancholy thoughts possessed her; she was leaving there one of the sweetest flowers of all her life, — a pure love, such as a young girl dreams of; the only true love she had ever known or was ever to conceive of. The woman of the world obeyed the laws of the world; she sacrificed love to their demands just as many women sacrifice it to religion or to duty. Sometimes mere pride can rise in acts as high as virtue. Read thus, this history is that of many women.

The next morning Calyste went to Les Touches about mid-day. When he reached the spot from which, the day before, he had seen Béatrix watching

for him at the window he saw Camille, who instantly ran down to him. She met him at the foot of the staircase and told the cruel truth in one word, —

“Gone!”

“*Béatrix?*” asked Calyste, thunderstruck.

“You have been duped by Conti; you told me nothing, and I could do nothing for you.”

She led the poor fellow to her little salon, where he flung himself on the divan where he had so often seen the marquise, and burst into tears. *Félicité* smoked her hookah and said nothing, knowing well that no words or thoughts are capable of arresting the first anguish of such pain, which is always deaf and dumb. Calyste, unable even to think, much less to choose a course, sat there all day in a state of complete torpidity. Just before dinner was served, Camille tried to say a few words, after begging him, very earnestly, to listen to her.

“Friend,” she said, “you caused me the bitterest suffering, and I had not, like you, a beautiful young life before me in which to heal myself. For me, life has no longer any spring, nor my soul a love. So, to find consolation, I have had to look above. Here, in this room, the day before *Béatrix* came here, I drew you her portrait; I did not do her injustice, or you might have thought me jealous. I wanted you to know her as she is, for that would have kept you safe. Listen now to the full truth. Madame de Rochefide is wholly unworthy of you. The scandal of her fall was not necessary; she did the thing deliberately in order to play a part in the eyes of society. She is one of those women who prefer the celebrity of a

scandal to tranquil happiness; they fly in the face of society to obtain the fatal alms of a rebuke; they desire to be talked about at any cost. Béatrix was eaten up with vanity. Her fortune and her wit had not given her the feminine royalty that she craved; they had not enabled her to reign supreme over a salon. She then bethought herself of seeking the celebrity of the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. But the world, after all, is just; it gives the homage of its interest to real feelings only. Béatrix playing comedy was judged to be a second-rate actress. There was no reason whatever for her flight; the sword of Damocles was not suspended over her head; she is neither sincere, nor loving, nor tender; if she were, would she have gone away with Conti this morning?"

Camille talked long and eloquently; but this last effort to open Calyste's eyes was useless, and she said no more when he expressed to her by a gesture his absolute belief in Béatrix.

She forced him to come down into the dining-room and sit there while she dined; though he himself was unable to swallow food. It is only during extreme youth that these contractions of the bodily functions occur. Later, the organs have acquired, as it were, fixed habits, and are hardened. The reaction of the mental and moral system upon the physical is not enough to produce a mortal illness unless the physical system retains its primitive purity. A man resists the violent grief that kills a youth, less by the greater weakness of his affections than by the greater strength of his organs.

Therefore Mademoiselle des Touches was greatly alarmed by the calm, resigned attitude which Calyste took after his first burst of tears had subsided. Before he left her, he asked permission to go into Béatrix's bedroom, where he had seen her on the night of her illness, and there he laid his head on the pillow where hers had lain.

"I am committing follies," he said, grasping Camille's hand, and bidding her good-night in deep dejection.

He returned home, found the usual company at *mouche*, and passed the remainder of the evening sitting beside his mother. The rector, the Chevalier du Halga, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël all knew of Madame de Rochefide's departure, and were rejoicing in it. Calyste would now return to them; and all three watched him cautiously, observing his taciturnity. No one in that old manor-house was capable of imagining the result of a first love, the love of youth in a heart so simple and so true as that of Calyste.

XVI.

SICKNESS UNTO DEATH.

FOR several days Calyste went regularly to Les Touches. He paced round and round the lawn, where he had sometimes walked with Béatrix on his arm. He often went to Croisic to stand upon that fateful rock, or lie for hours in the bush of box; for, by studying the footholds on the sides of the fissure, he had found a means of getting up and down.

These solitary trips, his silence, his gravity, made his mother very anxious. After about two weeks, during which time this conduct, like that of a caged animal, lasted, this poor lover, caged in his despair, ceased to cross the bay; he had scarcely strength enough to drag himself along the road from Guérande to the spot where he had seen Béatrix watching from her window. The family, delighted at the departure of "those Parisians," to use a term of the provinces, saw nothing fatal or diseased about the lad. The two old maids and the rector, pursuing their scheme, had kept Charlotte de Kergarouët, who nightly played off her little coquetries on Calyste, obtaining in return nothing better than advice in playing *mouche*. During these long evenings, Calyste sat between his mother and the little Breton girl, observed by the rector and Charlotte's aunt, who discussed his greater or less

depression as they walked home together. Their simple minds mistook the lethargic indifference of the hapless youth for submission to their plans. One evening when Calyste, wearied out, went off suddenly to bed, the players dropped their cards upon the table and looked at each other as the young man closed the door of his chamber. One and all had listened to the sound of his receding steps with anxiety.

"Something is the matter with Calyste," said the baroness, wiping her eyes.

"Nothing is the matter," replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; "but you should marry him at once."

"Do you believe that marriage would divert his mind?" asked the chevalier.

Charlotte looked reprovingly at Monsieur du Halga, whom she now began to think ill-mannered, depraved, immoral, without religion, and very ridiculous about his dog, — opinions which her aunt, defending the old sailor, combated.

"I shall lecture Calyste to-morrow morning," said the baron, whom the others had thought asleep. "I do not wish to go out of this world without seeing my grandson, a little pink and white Guénic with a Breton cap on his head."

"Calyste does n't say a word," said old Zéphirine, "and there's no making out what's the matter with him. He does n't eat; I don't see what he lives on. If he gets his meals at Les Touches, the devil's kitchen does n't nourish him."

"He is in love," said the chevalier, risking that opinion very timidly.

“Come, come, old gray-beard, you’ve forgotten to put in your stake!” cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. “When you begin to think of your young days you forget everything.”

“Come to breakfast to-morrow,” said old Zéphirine to her friend Jacqueline; “my brother will have had a talk with his son, and we can settle the matter finally. One nail, you know, drives out another.”

“Not among Bretons,” said the chevalier.

The next day Calyste saw Charlotte, as she arrived dressed with unusual care, just after the baron had given him, in the dining-room, a discourse on matrimony, to which he could make no answer. He now knew the ignorance of his father and mother and all their friends; he had gathered the fruits of the tree of knowledge, and knew himself to be as much isolated as if he did not speak the family language. He merely requested his father to give him a few days’ grace. The old baron rubbed his hands with joy, and gave fresh life to the baroness by whispering in her ear what he called the good news.

Breakfast was gay; Charlotte, to whom the baron had given a hint, was sparkling. After the meal was over, Calyste went out upon the portico leading to the garden, followed by Charlotte; he gave her his arm and led her to the grotto. Their parents and friends were at the window, looking at them with a species of tenderness. Presently Charlotte, uneasy at her suitor’s silence, looked back and saw them, which gave her an opportunity of beginning the conversation by saying to Calyste, —

“They are watching us.”

“They cannot hear us,” he replied.

“True; but they see us.”

“Let us sit down, Charlotte,” replied Calyste, gently taking her hand.

“Is it true that your banner used formerly to float from that twisted column?” asked Charlotte, with a sense that the house was already hers; how comfortable she should be there! what a happy sort of life! “You will make some changes inside the house, won’t you, Calyste?” she said.

“I shall not have time, my dear Charlotte,” said the young man, taking her hands and kissing them. “I am going now to tell you my secret. I love too well a person whom you have seen, and who loves me, to be able to make the happiness of any other woman; though I know that from our childhood you and I have been destined for each other by our friends.”

“But she is married, Calyste.”

“I shall wait,” replied the young man.

“And I, too,” said Charlotte, her eyes filling with tears. “You cannot long love a woman like that, who, they say, has gone off with a singer —”

“Marry, my dear Charlotte,” said Calyste, interrupting her. “With the fortune your aunt intends to give you, which is enormous for Brittany, you can choose some better man than I. You could marry a titled man. I have brought you here, not to tell you what you already knew, but to entreat you, in the name of our childish friendship, to take this rupture upon yourself, and say that you have rejected me. Say that you do not wish to marry a man whose heart

is not free; and thus I shall be spared at least the sense that I have done you public wrong. You do not know, Charlotte, how heavy a burden life now is to me. I cannot bear the slightest struggle; I am weakened like a man whose vital spark is gone, whose soul has left him. If it were not for the grief I should cause my mother, I would have flung myself before now into the sea; I have not returned to the rocks at Croisic since the day that temptation became almost irresistible. Do not speak of this to any one. Good-bye, Charlotte."

He took the young girl's head and kissed her hair; then he left the garden by the postern-gate and fled to Les Touches, where he stayed near Camille till past midnight. On returning home, at one in the morning, he found his mother awaiting him with her worsted-work. He entered softly, clasped her hand in his, and said, —

"Is Charlotte gone?"

"She goes to-morrow, with her aunt, in despair, both of them," answered the baroness. "Come to Ireland with me, my Calyste."

"Many a time I have thought of flying there —"

"Ah!" cried the baroness.

"With Béatrix," he added.

Some days after Charlotte's departure, Calyste joined the Chevalier du Halga in his daily promenade on the mall with his little dog. They sat down in the sunshine on a bench, where the young man's eyes could wander from the vanes of Les Touches to the rocks of Croisic, against which the waves were playing and dashing their white foam. Calyste was thin and

pale; his strength was diminishing, and he was conscious at times of little shudders at regular intervals, denoting fever. His eyes, surrounded by dark circles, had that singular brilliancy which a fixed idea gives to the eyes of hermits and solitary souls, or the ardor of contest to those of the strong fighters of our present civilization. The chevalier was the only person with whom he could exchange a few ideas. He had divined in that old man an apostle of his own religion; he recognized in his soul the vestiges of an eternal love.

"Have you loved many women in your life?" he asked him on the second occasion, when, as seamen say, they sailed in company along the mall.

"Only one," replied Du Halga.

"Was she free?"

"No," exclaimed the chevalier. "Ah! how I suffered! She was the wife of my best friend, my protector, my chief — but we loved each other so!"

"Did she love you?" said Calyste.

"Passionately," replied the chevalier, with a fervency not usual with him.

"You were happy?"

"Until her death; she died at the age of forty-nine, during the emigration, at St. Petersburg, the climate of which killed her. She must be very cold in her coffin. I have often thought of going there to fetch her, and lay her in our dear Brittany, near to me! But she lies in my heart."

The chevalier brushed away his tears. Calyste took his hand and pressed it.

"I care for this little dog more than for life itself," said the old man, pointing to Thisbe. "The little

darling is precisely like the one she held on her knees and stroked with her beautiful hands. I never look at Thisbe but what I see the hands of Madame l'Amirale."

"Did you see Madame de Rochefide?" asked Calyste.

"No," replied the chevalier. "It is sixty-eight years since I have looked at any woman with attention — except your mother, who has something of Madame l'Amirale's complexion."

Three days later, the chevalier said to Calyste, on the mall, —

"My child, I have a hundred and forty *louis* laid by. When you know where Madame de Rochefide is, come and get them and follow her."

Calyste thanked the old man, whose existence he envied. But now, from day to day, he grew morose; he seemed to love no one; all things hurt him; he was gentle and kind to his mother only. The baroness watched with ever increasing anxiety the progress of his madness; she alone was able, by force of prayer and entreaty, to make him swallow food. Toward the end of October the sick lad ceased to go even to the mall in search of the chevalier, who now came vainly to the house to tempt him out with the coaxing wisdom of an old man.

"We can talk of Madame de Rochefide," he would say. "I'll tell you my first adventure."

"Your son is very ill," he said privately to the baroness, on the day he became convinced that all such efforts were useless.

Calyste replied to questions about his health that he

was perfectly well; but like all young victims of melancholy, he took pleasure in the thought of death. He no longer left the house, but sat in the garden on a bench, warming himself in the pale and tepid sunshine, alone with his one thought, and avoiding all companionship.

Soon after the day when Calyste ceased to go even to Les Touches, Félicité requested the rector of Guérande to come and see her. The assiduity with which the Abbé Grimont called every morning at Les Touches, and sometimes dined there, became the great topic of the town; it was talked of all over the region, and even reached Nantes. Nevertheless, the rector never missed a single evening at the hôtel du Guénic, where desolation reigned. Masters and servants were all afflicted at Calyste's increasing weakness, though none of them thought him in danger; how could it ever enter the minds of these good people that youth might die of love? Even the chevalier had no example of such a death among his memories of life and travel. They attributed Calyste's thinness to want of food. His mother implored him to eat. Calyste endeavored to conquer his repugnance in order to comfort her; but nourishment taken against his will served only to increase the slow fever which was now consuming the beautiful young life.

During the last days of October the cherished child of the house could no longer mount the stairs to his chamber, and his bed was placed in the lower hall, where he was surrounded at all hours by his family. They sent at last for the Guérande physician, who broke the fever with quinine and reduced it in a few

days, ordering Calyste to take exercise, and find something to amuse him. The baron, on this, came out of his apathy and recovered a little of his old strength; he grew younger as his son seemed to age. With Calyste, Gasselin, and his two fine dogs, he started for the forest, and for some days all three hunted. Calyste obeyed his father and went where he was told, from forest to forest, visiting friends and acquaintances in the neighboring châteaux. But the youth had no spirit or gayety; nothing brought a smile to his face; his livid and contracted features betrayed an utterly passive being. The baron, worn out at last by fatigue consequent on this spasm of exertion, was forced to return home, bringing Calyste in a state of exhaustion almost equal to his own. For several days after their return both father and son were so dangerously ill that the family were forced to send, at the request of the Guérande physician himself, for two of the best doctors in Nantes.

The baron had received a fatal shock on realizing the change now so visible in Calyste. With that lucidity of mind which nature gives to the dying, he trembled at the thought that his race was about to perish. He said no word, but he clasped his hands and prayed to God as he sat in his chair, from which his weakness now prevented him from rising. The father's face was turned toward the bed where the son lay, and he looked at him almost incessantly. At the least motion Calyste made, a singular commotion stirred within him, as if the flame of his own life were flickering. The baroness no longer left the room where Zéphirine sat knitting in the chimney-corner in

horrible uneasiness. Demands were made upon the old woman for wood, father and son both suffering from the cold, and for supplies and provisions, so that, finally, not being agile enough to supply these wants, she had given her precious keys to Mariotte. But she insisted on knowing everything; she questioned Mariotte and her sister-in-law incessantly, asking in a low voice to be told, over and over again, the state of her brother and nephew. One night, when father and son were dozing, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël told her that she must resign herself to the death of her brother, whose pallid face was now the color of wax. The old woman dropped her knitting, fumbled in her pocket for a while, and at length drew out an old chaplet of black wood, on which she began to pray with a fervor which gave to her old and withered face a splendor so vigorous that the other old woman imitated her friend, and then all present, on a sign from the rector, joined in the spiritual uplifting of Mademoiselle du Guénic.

“Alas! I prayed to God,” said the baroness, remembering her prayer after reading the fatal letter written by Calyste, “and he did not hear me.”

“Perhaps it would be well,” said the rector, “if we begged Mademoiselle des Touches to come and see Calyste.”

“She!” cried old Zéphirine, “the author of all our misery! she who has turned him from his family, who has taken him from us, led him to read impious books, taught him an heretical language! Let her be accursed, and may God never pardon her! She has destroyed the du Guénics!”

“She may perhaps restore them,” said the rector, in a gentle voice. “Mademoiselle des Touches is a saintly woman; I am her surety for that. She has none but good intentions to Calyste. . May she only be enabled to carry them out.”

“Let me know the day when she sets foot in this house, that I may go out of it,” cried the old woman passionately. “She has killed both father and son. Do you think I don’t hear death in Calyste’s voice? he is so feeble now that he has barely strength to whisper.”

It was at this moment that the three doctors arrived. They plied Calyste with questions; but as for his father, the examination was short; they were surprised that he still lived on. The Guérande doctor calmly told the baroness that as to Calyste, it would probably be best to take him to Paris and consult the most experienced physicians, for it would cost over a hundred *louis* to bring one down.

“People die of something, but not of love,” said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

“Alas! whatever be the cause, Calyste is dying,” said the baroness. “I see all the symptoms of consumption, that most horrible disease of my country, about him.”

“Calyste dying!” said the baron, opening his eyes, from which rolled two large tears which slowly made their way, delayed by wrinkles, along his cheeks, — the only tears he had probably ever shed in all his life. Suddenly he rose to his feet, walked the few steps to his son’s bedside, took his hand, and looked earnestly at him.

"What is it you want, father?" said Calyste.

"That you should live!" cried the baron.

"I cannot live without Béatrix," replied Calyste.

The old man dropped into a chair.

"Oh! where could we get the hundred *louis* to bring doctors from Paris? There is still time," cried the baroness.

"A hundred *louis*!" cried Zéphirine; "will that save him?"

Without waiting for her sister-in-law's reply, the old maid ran her hands through the placket-holes of her gown, unfastened the petticoat beneath it, which gave forth a heavy sound as it dropped to the floor. She knew so well the places where she had sewn in her *louis* that she now ripped them out with the rapidity of magic. The gold pieces rang as they fell, one by one, into her lap. The old Pen-Hoël gazed at this performance in stupefied amazement.

"But they'll see you!" she whispered in her friend's ear.

"Thirty-seven," answered Zéphirine, continuing to count.

"Every one will know how much you have."

"Forty-two."

"Double *louis*! all new! How did you get them, you who can't see clearly?"

"I felt them. Here's one hundred and four *louis*," cried Zéphirine. "Is that enough?"

"What is all this?" asked the Chevalier du Halga, who now came in, unable to understand the attitude of his old blind friend, holding out her petticoat which was full of gold coins.

Mademoiselle Pén-Hoël explained.

"I knew it," said the chevalier, "and I have come to bring a hundred and forty *louis* which I have been holding at Calyste's disposition, as he knows very well."

The chevalier drew the *rouleaux* from his pocket and showed them. Mariotte, seeing such wealth, sent Gasselin to lock the doors.

"Gold will not give him health," said the baroness, weeping.

"But it can take him to Paris, where he can find her. Come, Calyste."

"Yes," cried Calyste, springing up, "I will go."

"He will live," said the baron, in a shaking voice; "and I can die — send for the rector!"

The words cast terror on all present. Calyste, seeing the mortal paleness on his father's face, for the old man was exhausted by the cruel emotions of the scene, came to his father's side. The rector, after hearing the report of the doctors, had gone to Mademoiselle des Touches, intending to bring her back with him to Calyste, for in proportion as the worthy man had formerly detested her, he now admired her, and protected her as a shepherd protects the most precious of his flock.

When the news of the baron's approaching end became known in Guérande, a crowd gathered in the street and lane; the peasants, the *paludiers*, and the servants knelt in the court-yard while the rector administered the last sacraments to the old Breton warrior. The whole town was agitated by the news that the father was dying beside his half-dying son. The

probable extinction of this old Breton race was felt to be a public calamity.

The solemn ceremony affected Calyste deeply. His filial sorrow silenced for a moment the anguish of his love. During the last hour of the glorious old defender of the monarchy, he knelt beside him, watching the coming on of death. The old man died in his chair in presence of the assembled family.

"I die faithful to God and his religion," he said. "My God! as the reward of my efforts grant that Calyste may live!"

"I shall live, father; and I will obey you," said the young man.

"If you wish to make my death as happy as Fanny has made my life, swear to me to marry."

"I promise it, father."

It was a touching sight to see Calyste, or rather his shadow, leaning on the arm of the old Chevalier du Halga — a spectre leading a shade — and following the baron's coffin as chief mourner. The church and the little square were crowded with the country people coming in to the funeral from a circuit of thirty miles.

But the baroness and Zéphirine soon saw that, in spite of his intention to obey his father's wishes, Calyste was falling back into a condition of fatal stupor. On the day when the family put on their mourning, the baroness took her son to a bench in the garden and questioned him closely. Calyste answered gently and submissively, but his answers only proved to her the despair of his soul.

"Mother," he said, "there is no life in me. What

I eat does not feed me; the air that enters my lungs does not refresh me; the sun feels cold; it seems to you to light that front of the house, and show you the old carvings bathed in its beams, but to me it is all a blur, a mist. If Béatrix were here, it would be dazzling. There is but one only thing left in this world that keeps its shape and color to my eyes, — this flower, this foliage," he added, drawing from his breast the withered bunch the marquise had give him at Croisic.

The baroness dared not say more. Her son's answer seemed to her more indicative of madness than his silence of grief. She saw no hope, no light in the darkness that surrounded them.

The baron's last hours and death had prevented the rector from bringing Mademoiselle des Touches to Calyste, as he seemed bent on doing, for reasons which he did not reveal. But on this day, while mother and son still sat on the garden bench, Calyste quivered all over on perceiving Félicité through the opposite wiudows of the court-yard and garden. She reminded him of Béatrix, and his life revived. It was therefore to Camille that the poor stricken mother owed the first motion of joy that lightened her mourning.

"Well, Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches, when they met, "I want you to go to Paris with me. We will find Béatrix," she added in a low voice.

The pale, thin face of the youth flushed red, and a smile brightened his features.

"Let us go," he said.

"We shall save him," said Mademoiselle des

Touches to the mother, who pressed her hands and wept for joy.

A week after the baron's funeral, Mademoiselle des Touches, the Baronne du Guénic and Calyste started for Paris, leaving the household in charge of old Zéphirine.

XVII.

A DEATH : A MARRIAGE.

FÉLICITÉ'S tender love was preparing for Calyste a prosperous future. Being allied to the family of Grandlieu, the ducal branch of which was ending in five daughters for lack of a male heir, she had written to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, describing Calyste and giving his history, and also stating certain intentions of her own, which were as follows: She had lately sold her house in the rue du Mont-Blanc, for which a party of speculators had given her two millions five hundred thousand francs. Her man of business had since purchased for her a charming new house in the rue de Bourbon for seven hundred thousand francs; one million she intended to devote to the recovery of the du Guénic estates, and the rest of her fortune she desired to settle upon Sabine de Grandlieu. Félicité had long known the plans of the duke and duchess as to the settlement of their five daughters: the youngest was to marry the Vicomte de Grandlieu, the heir to their ducal title; Clotilde-Frédérique, the second daughter, desired to remain unmarried, in memory of a man she had deeply loved, Lucien de Rubempré, while, at the same time, she did not wish to become a nun like her eldest sister; two of the remaining sisters were already married, and the youngest but one, the pretty Sabine, just twenty years old, was the only disposable daughter

left. It was Sabine on whom Félicité resolved to lay the burden of curing Calyste's passion for Béatrix.

During the journey to Paris Mademoiselle des Touches revealed to the baroness these arrangements. The new house in the rue de Bourbon was being decorated, and she intended it for the home of Sabine and Calyste if her plans succeeded.

The party had been invited to stay at the hôtel de Grandlieu, where the baroness was received with all the distinction due to her rank as the wife of a du Guénic and the daughter of a British peer. Mademoiselle des Touches urged Calyste to see Paris, while she herself made the necessary inquiries about Béatrix (who had disappeared from the world, and was traveling abroad), and she took care to throw him into the midst of diversions and amusements of all kinds. The season for balls and fêtes was just beginning, and the duchess and her daughters did the honors of Paris to the young Breton, who was insensibly diverted from his own thoughts by the movement and life of the great city. He found some resemblance of mind between Madame de Rochefide and Sabine de Grandlieu, who was certainly one of the handsomest and most charming girls in Parisian society, and this fancied likeness made him give to her coquetries a willing attention which no other woman could possibly have obtained from him. Sabine herself was greatly pleased with Calyste, and matters went so well that during the winter of 1837 the young Baron du Guénic, whose youth and health had returned to him, listened without repugnance to his mother when she reminded him of the promise made to his dying father and proposed to

him a marriage with Sabine de Grandlieu. Still, while agreeing to fulfil his promise, he concealed within his soul an indifference to all things, of which the baroness alone was aware, but which she trusted would be conquered by the pleasures of a happy home.

On the day when the Grandliéu family and the baroness, accompanied by her relations who came from England for this occasion, assembled in the grand salon of the hôtel de Grandlieu to sign the marriage contract, and Léopold Hannequin, the family notary, explained the preliminaries of that contract before reading it, Calyste, on whose forehead every one present might have noticed clouds, suddenly and curtly refused to accept the benefactions offered him by Mademoiselle des Touches. Did he still count on Félicité's devotion to recover Béatrix? In the midst of the embarrassment and stupefaction of the assembled families, Sabine de Grandlieu entered the room and gave him a letter, explaining that Mademoiselle des Touches had requested her to give it to him on this occasion.

Calyste turned away from the company to the embrasure of a window and read as follows: —

Camille Maupin to Calyste.

CALYSTE, before I enter my convent cell I am permitted to cast a look upon the world I am now to leave for a life of prayer and solitude. That look is to you, who have been the whole world to me in these last months. My voice will reach you, if my calculations do not miscarry, at the moment of a ceremony I am unable to take part in.

On the day when you stand before the altar giving your hand and name to a young and charming girl who can love you openly before earth and heaven, I shall be before another altar in a convent at Nantes betrothed forever to him who will neither fail nor betray me. But I do not write to sadden you, — only to entreat you not to hinder by false delicacy the service I have wished to do you since we first met. Do not contest my rights so dearly bought.

If love is suffering, ah! I have loved you indeed, my Calyste. But feel no remorse; the only happiness I have known in life I owe to you; the pangs were caused by my own self. Make me compensation, then, for all those pangs, those sorrows, by causing me an everlasting joy. Let the poor Camille, who *is* no longer, still be something in the material comfort you enjoy. Dear, let me be like the fragrance of flowers in your life, mingling myself with it unseen and not importunate.

To you, Calyste, I shall owe my eternal happiness; will you not accept a few paltry and fleeting benefits from me? Surely you will not be wanting in generosity? Do you not see in this the last message of a renounced love? Calyste, the world without you had nothing more for me; you made it the most awful of solitudes; and you have thus brought Camille Maupin, the unbeliever, the writer of books, which I am soon to repudiate solemnly — you have cast her, daring and perverted, bound hand and foot, before God.

I am to-day what I might have been, what I was born to be, — innocent, and a child. I have washed my robes in the tears of repentance; I can come

before the altar whither my guardian angel, my beloved Calyste, has led me. With what tender comfort I give you that name, which the step I now take sanctifies. I love you without self-seeking, as a mother loves her son, as the Church loves her children. I can pray for you and for yours without one thought or wish except for your happiness. Ah! if you only knew the sublime tranquillity in which I live, now that I have risen in thought above all petty earthly interests, and how precious is the thought of *DOING* (as your noble motto says) our duty, you would enter your beautiful new life with unfaltering step and never a glance behind you or about you. Above all, my earnest prayer to you is that you be faithful to yourself and to those belonging to you. Dear, society, in which you are to live, cannot exist without the religion of duty, and you will terribly mistake it, as I mistook it, if you allow yourself to yield to passion and to fancy, as I did. Woman is the equal of man only in making her life a continual offering, as that of man is a perpetual action; my life has been, on the contrary, one long egotism. It may be that God placed you, toward evening, by the door of my house, as a messenger from himself, bearing my punishment and my pardon.

Heed this confession of a woman to whom fame has been like a pharos, warning her of the only true path. Be wise, be noble; sacrifice your fancy to your duties, as head of your race, as husband, as father. Raise the fallen standard of the old du Guénics; show to this century of irreligion and want of principle what a gentleman is in all his grandeur and his honor. Dear child of my soul, let me play the part of a mother

to you; your own mother will not be jealous of this voice from a tomb, these hands uplifted to heaven, imploring blessings on you. To-day, more than ever, does rank and nobility need fortune. Calyste, accept a part of mine, and make a worthy use of it. It is not a gift; it is a trust I place in your hands. I have thought more of your children and of your old Breton house than of you in offering you the profits which time has brought to my property in Paris.

“Let us now sign the contract,” said the young baron, returning to the assembled company.

The Abbé Grimont, to whom the honor of the conversion of this celebrated woman was attributed, became, soon after, vicar-general of the diocese.

The following week, after the marriage ceremony, which, according to the custom of many families of the faubourg Saint-Germain, was celebrated at seven in the morning at the church of Saint Thomas d’Aquin, Calyste and Sabine got into their pretty travelling-carriage, amid the tears, embraces, and congratulations of a score of friends, collected under the awning of the hôtel de Grandlieu. The congratulations came from the four witnesses, and the men present; the tears were in the eyes of the Duchesse de Grandlieu and her daughter Clotilde, who both trembled under the weight of the same thought, —

“She is launched upon the sea of life! Poor Sabine! at the mercy of a man who does not marry entirely of his own free will.”

Marriage is not wholly made up of pleasures, — as fugitive in that relation as in all others; it involves

compatibility of temper, physical sympathies, harmonies of character, which make of that social necessity an eternal problem. Marriageable daughters, as well as mothers, know the terms as well as the dangers of this lottery; and that is why women weep at a wedding while men smile; men believe that they risk nothing, while women know, or very nearly know, what they risk.

In another carriage, which preceded the married pair, was the Baronne du Guénic, to whom the duchess had said at parting, —

“You are a mother, though you have only had one son; try to take my place to my dear Sabine.”

On the box of the bridal carriage sat a *chasseur*, who acted as courier, and in the rumble were two waiting-maids. The four postilions dressed in their finest uniforms, for each carriage was drawn by four horses, appeared with bouquets on their breasts and ribbons on their hats, which the Duc de Grandlieu had the utmost difficulty in making them relinquish, even by bribing them with money. The French postilion is eminently intelligent, but he likes his fun. These fellows took their bribes and replaced their ribbons at the barrier

“Well, good-bye, Sabine,” said the duchess; “remember your promise; write to me often. Calyste, I say nothing more to you, but you understand me.”

Clotilde, leaning on the youngest sister Athenais, who was smiling to the Vicomte de Grandlieu, cast a reflecting look through her tears at the bride, and followed the carriage with her eyes as it disappeared to the clacking of four whips, more noisy than the

shots of a pistol gallery. In a few minutes the gay convoy had reached the esplanade of the Invalides, the barrier of Passy by the quay of the Pont d'Iéna, and were fairly on the high-road to Brittany.

Is it not a singular thing that the artisans of Switzerland and Germany, and the great families of France and England should, one and all, follow the custom of setting out on a journey after the marriage ceremony? The great people shut themselves in a box which rolls along; the little people gayly tramp the roads, sitting down in the woods, banqueting at the inns, as long as their joy, or rather their money lasts. A moralist is puzzled to decide on which side is the finer sense of modesty, — that which hides from the public eye and inaugurates the domestic hearth and bed in private, as do the worthy burghers of all lands, or that which withdraws from the family and exhibits itself publicly on the high-roads and in face of strangers. One would think that delicate souls might desire solitude and seek to escape both the world and their family. The love which begins a marriage is a pearl, a diamond, a jewel cut by the choicest of arts, a treasure to bury in the depths of the soul.

Who can relate a honeymoon, unless it be the bride? How many women reading this history will admit to themselves that this period of uncertain duration is the forecast of conjugal life? The first three letters of Sabine to her mother will depict a situation not surprising to some young brides and to many old women. All those who find themselves the sick-nurses, so to speak, of a husband's heart, do not, as Sabine did,

discover this at once. But young girls of the faubourg Saint-Germain, if intelligent, are women in mind. Before marriage, they have received from their mothers and the world they live in the baptism of good manners; though women of rank, anxious to hand down their traditions, do not always see the bearing of their own lessons when they say to their daughters: "That is a motion that must not be made;" "Never laugh at such things;" "No lady ever flings herself on a sofa; she sits down quietly;" "Pray give up such detestable ways;" "My dear, that is a thing which is never done," etc.

Many bourgeois critics unjustly deny the innocence and virtue of young girls who, like Sabine, are truly virgin at heart, improved by the training of their minds, by the habit of noble bearing, by natural good taste, while, from the age of sixteen, they have learned how to use their opera-glasses. Sabine was a girl of this school, which was also that of Mademoiselle de Chaulieu. This inborn sense of the fitness of things, these gifts of race made Sabine de Grandlieu as interesting a young woman as the heroine of the "Memoirs of two young Married Women." Her letters to her mother during the honeymoon, of which we here give three or four, will show the qualities of her mind and temperament.

GUÉRANDE, April, 1838.

To Madame la Duchesse de Grandlieu.

DEAR MAMMA, — You will understand why I did not write to you during the journey, — our wits are then like wheels. Here I am, for the last two days, in

the depths of Brittany, at the hôtel du Guénic, — a house as covered with carving as a sandal-wood box. In spite of the affectionate devotion of Calyste's family, I feel a keen desire to fly to you, to tell you many things which can only be trusted to a mother.

Calyste married, dear mamma, with a great sorrow in his heart. We all knew that, and you did not hide from me the difficulties of my position; but alas! they are greater than you thought. Ah! my dear mother, what experience we acquire in the short space of a few days — I might even say a few hours! All your counsels have proved fruitless; you will see why from one sentence: I love Calyste as if he were not my husband, — that is to say, if I were married to another, and were travelling with Calyste, I should love Calyste and hate my husband.

Now think of a man beloved so completely, involuntarily, absolutely, and all the other adverbs you may choose to employ, and you will see that my servitude is established in spite of your good advice. You told me to be grand, noble, dignified, and self-respecting in order to obtain from Calyste the feelings that are never subject to the chances and changes of life, — esteem, honor, and the consideration which sanctifies a woman in the bosom of her family. I remember how you blamed, I dare say justly, the young women of the present day, who, under pretext of living happily with their husbands, begin by compliance, flattery, familiarity, an abandonment, you called it, a little too wanton (a word I did not fully understand), all of which, if I must believe you, are

relays that lead rapidly to indifference and possibly to contempt. "Remember that you are a Grandlieu!" yes, I remember that you told me all that —

But oh! that advice, filled with the maternal eloquence of a female Dædalus has had the fate of all things mythological. Dear, beloved mother, could you ever have supposed it possible that I should begin by the catastrophe which, according to you, ends the honeymoon of the young women of the present day?

When Calyste and I were fairly alone in the traveling carriage, we felt rather foolish in each other's company, understanding the importance of the first word, the first look; and we both, bewildered by the solemnity, looked out of our respective windows. It became so ridiculous that when we reached the barrier monsieur began, in a rather troubled tone of voice, a set discourse, prepared, no doubt, like other improvisations, to which I listened with a beating heart, and which I take the liberty of here abridging.

"My dear Sabine," he said, "I want you to be happy, and, above all, do I wish you to be happy in your own way. Therefore, in the situation in which we are, instead of deceiving ourselves mutually about our characters and our feelings by noble compliances, let us endeavor to be to each other at once what we should be years hence. Think always that you have a friend and a brother in me, as I shall feel I have a sister and a friend in you."

Though it was all said with the utmost delicacy, I found nothing in this first conjugal love-speech which responded to the feelings in my soul, and I remained pensive after replying that I was animated by the same

sentiments. After this declaration of our rights to mutual coldness, we talked of weather, relays, and scenery in the most charming manner, — I with rather a forced little laugh, he absent-mindedly.

At last, as we were leaving Versailles, I turned to Calyste — whom I called my dear Calyste, and he called me my dear Sabine — and asked him plainly to tell me the events which had led him to the point of death, and to which I was aware that I owed the happiness of being his wife. He hesitated long. In fact, my request gave rise to a little argument between us, which lasted through three relays, — I endeavoring to maintain the part of an obstinate girl, and trying to sulk; he debating within himself the question which the newspapers used to put to Charles X.: “Must the king yield or not?” At last, after passing Verneuil, and exchanging oaths enough to satisfy three dynasties never to reproach him for his folly, and never to treat him coldly, etc., etc., he related to me his love for Madame de Rochefide.

“I do not wish,” he said, in conclusion, “to have any secrets between us.”

Poor, dear Calyste, it seems, was ignorant that his friend, Mademoiselle des Touches, and you had thought it right to tell me the truth. Well, mother, — for I can tell all to a mother as tender as you, — I was deeply hurt by perceiving that he had yielded less to my request than to his own desire to talk of that strange passion. Do you blame me, darling mother, for having wished to reconnoitre the extent of the grief, the open wound of the heart of which you warned me?”

So, eight hours after receiving the rector's blessing at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, your Sabine was in the rather false position of a young wife listening to a confidence, from the very lips of her husband, of his misplaced love for an unworthy rival. Yes, there I was, in the drama of a young woman learning, officially, as it were, that she owed her marriage to the disdainful rejection of an old and faded beauty!

Still, I gained what I sought. "What was that?" you will ask. Ah! mother dear, I have seen too much of love going on around me not to know how to put a little of it into practice. Well, Calyste ended the poem of his miseries with the warmest protestations of an absolute forgetting of what he called his madness. All kinds of affirmations have to be signed, you know. The happy unhappy one took my hand, carried it to his lips, and, after that, he kept it for a long time clasped in his own. A declaration followed. *That one* seemed to me more conformable than the first to the demands of our new condition, though our lips said never a word. Perhaps I owed it to the vigorous indignation I felt and showed at the bad taste of a woman foolish enough not to love my beautiful, my glorious Calyste.

They are calling me to play a game of cards, which I do not yet understand. I will finish my letter tomorrow. To leave you at this moment to make a fifth at *mouche* (that is the name of the game) can only be done in the depths of Brittany — Adieu.

YOUR SABINE.

GUÉRANDE, May, 1838.

I TAKE up my *Odyssey*. On the third day your children no longer used the ceremonious "you;" they thee'd and thou'd each other like lovers. My mother-in-law, enchanted to see us so happy, is trying to take your place to me, dear mother, and, as often happens when people play a part to efface other memories, she has been so charming that she is, *almost*, you to me.

I think she has guessed the heroism of my conduct, for at the beginning of our journey she tried to hide her anxiety with such care that it was visible from excessive precaution.

When I saw the towers of Guérande rising in the distance, I whispered in the ear of your son-in-law, "Have you really forgotten her?" My husband, now become *my angel*, can't know anything, I think, about sincere and simple love, for the words made him wild with happiness. Still, I think the desire to put Madame de Rochefide forever out of his mind led me too far. But how could I help it? I love, and I am half a Portuguese, — for I am much more like you, mamma, than like my father.

Calyste accepts all from me as spoilt children accept things, they think it their right; he is an only child, I remember that. But, between ourselves, I will not give my daughter (if I have any daughters) to an only son. I see a variety of tyrants in an only son. So, mamma, we have rather inverted our parts, and I am the devoted half of the pair. There are dangers, I know, in devotion, though we profit by it; we lose our dignity, for one thing. I feel bound to tell you of the wreck of that semi-virtue. Dignity, after all, is

only a screen set up before pride, behind which we rage as we please; but how could I help it? you were not here, and I saw a gulf opening before me. Had I remained upon my dignity, I should have won only the cold joys (or pains) of a sort of brotherhood which would soon have drifted into indifference. What sort of future might that have led to? My devotion has, I know, made me Calyste's slave; but shall I regret it? We shall see.

As for the present, I am delighted with it. I love Calyste; I love him absolutely, with the folly of a mother, who thinks that all her son may do is right, even if he tyrannizes a trifle over her.

GUÉRANDE, May 15th.

UP to the present moment, dear mamma, I find marriage a delightful affair. I can spend all my tenderness on the noblest of men whom a foolish woman disdained for a fiddler, — for that woman evidently was a fool, and a cold fool, the worst kind! I, in my legitimate love, am charitable; I am curing his wounds while I lay my heart open to incurable ones. Yes, the more I love Calyste, the more I feel that I should die of grief if our present happiness ever ceased.

I must tell you how the whole family and the circle which meets at the hôtel du Guénic adore me. They are all personages born under tapestries of the highest warp; in fact, they seem to have stepped from those old tapestries as if to prove that the impossible may exist. Some day, when we are alone together, I will describe to you my Aunt Zéphirine, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, the Chevalier du Halga, the Demoiselles

de Kergarouët, and others. They all, even to the two servants, Gasselin and Mariotte (whom I wish they would let me take to Paris), regard me as an angel sent from heaven; they tremble when I speak. Dear people! they ought to be preserved under glass.

My mother-in-law has solemnly installed us in the apartments formerly occupied by herself and her late husband. The scene was touching. She said to us, —

“I spent my whole married life, a happy woman, in these rooms; may the omen be a happy one for you, my children.”

She has taken Calyste's former room for hers. Saintly soul! she seems intent on laying off her memories and all her conjugal dignities to invest us with them. The province of Brittany, this town, this family of ancient morals and ancient customs has, in spite of certain absurdities which strike the eye of a frivolous Parisian girl, something inexplicable, something grandiose even in its trifles, which can only be defined by the word *sacred*.

All the tenants of the vast domains of the house of Guénic, bought back, as you know, by Mademoiselle des Touches (whom we are going to visit in her convent), have been in a body to pay their respects to us. These worthy people, in their holiday costumes, expressing their genuine joy in the fact that Calyste has now become really and truly their master, made me understand Brittany, the fental system and *old France*. The whole scene was a festival I can't describe to you in writing, but I will tell you about it when we meet. The terms of the leases have been proposed by the *gars*

themselves. We shall sign them, after making a tour of inspection round the estates, which have been mortgaged away from us for one hundred and fifty years! Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël told me that the *gurs* have reckoned up the revenues and estimated the rentals with a veracity and justice Parisians would never believe.

We start in three days on horseback for this trip. I will write you on my return, dear mother. I shall have nothing more to tell you about myself, for my happiness is at its height — and how can that be told? I shall write you only what you know already, and that is, how I love you.

NANTES, June, 1838.

HAVING now played the rôle of a châtelaine, adored by her vassals as if the revolutions of 1789 and 1830 had lowered no banners; and after rides through forests, and halts at farmhouses, dinners on oaken tables, covered with centenary linen, bending under Homeric viands served on antediluvian dishes; after drinking the choicest wines in goblets to volleys of musketry, accompanied by cries of "Long live the Guénics!" till I was deafened; after balls, where the only orchestra was a bagpipe, blown by a man for ten hours; and after bouquets, and young brides who wanted us to bless them, and downright weariness, which made me find in my bed a sleep I never knew before, with delightful awakenings when love shone radiant as the sun pouring in upon me, and scintillating with a million of flies, all buzzing in the Breton dialect! — in short, after a most grotesque residence in the

Château du Guénic, where the windows are gates and the cows graze peacefully on the grass in the halls (which castle we have sworn to repair and to inhabit for a while every year to the wild acclamations of the clan du Guénic, a *gars* of which bore high our banner) — ouf! I am at Nantes.

But oh! what a day was that when we arrived at the old castle! The rector came out, mother, with all his clergy, crowned with flowers, to receive us and bless us, expressing such joy, — the tears are in my eyes as I think of it. And my noble Calyste! who played his part of seigneur like a personage in Walter Scott! My lord received his tenants' homage as if he were back in the thirteenth century. I heard the girls and the women saying to each other, "Oh, what a beautiful seigneur we have!" for all the world like an opera chorus. The old men talked of Calyste's resemblance to the former Guénics whom they had known in their youth. Ah! noble, sublime Brittany! land of belief and faith! But progress has got its eye upon it; bridges are being built, roads made, ideas are coming, and then farewell to the sublime! The peasants will certainly not be as free and proud as I have now seen them, when progress has proved to them that they are Calyste's equals — if, indeed, they could ever be got to believe it.

After this poem of our pacific Restoration had been sung, and the contracts and leases signed, we left that ravishing land, all flowery, gay, solemn, lonely by turns, and came here to kneel with our happiness at the feet of her who gave it to us.

Calyste and I both felt the need of thanking the

sister of the Visitation. In memory of her he has quartered his own arms with those of Des Touches, which are: party coupé, tranché and taillé or and sinople, on the latter two eagles argent. He means to take one of the eagles argent for his own supporter and put this motto in its beak: *Sourîègne-vous.*

Yesterday we went to the convent of the ladies of the Visitation, to which we were taken by the Abbé Grimont, a friend of the du Guénié family, who told us that your dear Félicité, mamma, was indeed a saint. She could not very well be anything else to him, for her conversion, which was thought to be his doing, has led to his appointment as vicar-general of the diocese. Mademoiselle des Touches declined to receive Calyste, and would only see me. I found her slightly changed, thinner and paler; but she seemed much pleased at my visit.

“Tell Calyste,” she said, in a low voice, “that it is a matter of conscience with me not to see him, for I am permitted to do so. I prefer not to buy that happiness by months of suffering. Ah, you do not know what it costs me to reply to the question, ‘Of what are you thinking?’ Certainly the mother of the novices has no conception of the number and extent of the ideas which are rushing through my mind when she asks that question. Sometimes I am seeing Italy or Paris, with all its sights; always thinking, however, of Calyste, who is” — she said this in that poetic way you know and admire so much — “who is the sun of memory to me. I found,” she continued, “that I was too old to be received among the Carmelites, and I have entered the order of Saint-François de Sales

solely because he said, 'I will bare your heads instead of your feet,' — objecting, as he did, to austerities which mortified the body only. It is, in truth, the head that sins. The saintly bishop was right to make his rule austere toward the intellect, and terrible against the will. That is what I sought; for my head was the guilty part of me. It deceived me as to my heart until I reached that fatal age of forty, when, for a few brief moments, we are forty times happier than young women, and then, speedily, fifty times more unhappy. But, my child, tell me," she asked, ceasing with visible satisfaction to speak of herself, "are you happy?"

"You see me under all the enchantments of love and happiness," I answered.

"Calyste is as good and simple as he is noble and beautiful," she said, gravely. "I have made you my heiress in more things than property; you now possess the double ideal of which I dreamed. I rejoice in what I have done," she continued, after a pause. "But, my child, make no mistake; do yourself no wrong. You have easily won happiness; you have only to stretch out your hand to take it, and it is yours; but be careful to preserve it. If you had come here solely to carry away with you the counsels that my knowledge of your husband alone can give you, the journey would be well repaid. Calyste is moved at this moment by a communicated passion, but you have not inspired it. To make your happiness lasting, try, my dear child, to give him something of his former emotions. In the interests of both of you, be capricious, be coquettish; to tell you the truth, you *must*

be. I am not advising any odious scheming, or petty tyranny; this that I tell you is the science of a woman's life. Between usury and prodigality, my child, is economy. Study, therefore, to acquire honorably a certain empire over Calyste. These are the last words on earthly interests that I shall ever utter, and I have kept them to say as we part; for there are times when I tremble in my conscience lest to save Calyste I may have sacrificed you. Bind him to you, firmly, give him children, let him respect their mother in you — and," she added in a low and trembling voice, "manage, if you can, that he shall never again see Béatrix."

That name plunged us both into a sort of stupor; we looked into each other's eyes, exchanging a vague uneasiness.

"Do you return to Guérande?" she asked me.

"Yes," I said.

"Never go to Les Touches. I did wrong to give him that property."

"Why?" I asked.

"Child!" she answered, "Les Touches for you is Bluebeard's chamber. There is nothing so dangerous as to wake a sleeping passion."

I have given you, dear mamma, the substance, or at any rate, the meaning of our conversation. If Mademoiselle des Touches made me talk to her freely, she also gave me much to think of; and all the more because, in the delight of this trip, and the charm of these relations with my Calyste, I had well-nigh forgotten the serious situation of which I spoke to you in my first letter, and about which you warned me.

But oh! mother, it is impossible for me to follow these counsels. I cannot put an appearance of opposition or caprice into my love; it would falsify it. Calyste will do with me what he pleases. According to your theory, the more I am a woman the more I make myself his toy; for I am, and I know it, horribly weak in my happiness; I cannot resist a single glance of my lord. But no! I do not abandon myself to love; I only cling to it, as a mother presses her infant to her breast, fearing some evil.

NOTE. — When “*Béatrix*” was first published, in 1839, the volume ended with the following paragraph: “Calyste, rich and married to the most beautiful woman in Paris, retains a sadness in his soul which nothing dissipates, — not even the birth of a son at Guérande, in 1839, to the great joy of Zéphirine du Guénic. *Béatrix* lives still in the depths of his heart, and it is impossible to foresee what disasters might result should he again meet with Madame de Rochefide.” In 1842 this concluding paragraph was suppressed and the story continued as here follows. — Tr.

XVIII.

THE END OF A HONEY-MOON.

GUÉRANDE, July, 1838.

To Madame la Duchesse de Grandlieu :

AH, my dear mamma! at the end of three months to know what it is to be jealous! My heart completes its experience; I now feel the deepest hatred and the deepest love! I am more than betrayed, — I am not loved. How fortunate for me to have a mother, a heart on which to cry out as I will!

It is enough to say to wives who are still half girls: “Here’s a key rusty with memories among those of your palace; go everywhere, enjoy everything, but keep away from Les Touches!” to make us eager to go there hot-foot, our eyes shining with the curiosity of Eve. What a root of bitterness Mademoiselle des Touches planted in my love! Why did she forbid me to go to Les Touches? What sort of happiness is mine if it depends on an excursion, on a visit to a paltry house in Brittany? Why should I fear? Is there anything to fear? Add to this reasoning of Mrs. Blue-Beard the desire that nips all women to know if their power is solid or precarious, and you’ll understand how it was that I said one day, with an unconcerned little air: —

“What sort of place is Les Touches?”

“Les Touches belongs to you,” said my-divine, dear mother-in-law.

“If Calyste had never set foot in Les Touches!”—cried my aunt Zéphirine, shaking her head.

“He would not be my husband,” I added.

“Then you know what happened there?” said my mother-in-law, slyly.

“It is a place of perdition!” exclaimed Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. “Mademoiselle des Touches committed many sins there, for which she is now asking pardon of God.”

“But they saved the soul of that noble woman, and made the fortune of a convent,” cried the Chevalier du Halga. “The Abbé Grimont told me she had given a hundred thousand francs to the nuns of the Visitation.”

“Should you like to go to Les Touches?” asked my mother-in-law. “It is worth seeing.”

“No, no!” I said hastily.

Does n't this little scene read to you like a page out of some diabolical drama?

It was repeated again and again under various pretexts. At last my mother-in-law said to me: “I understand why you do not go to Les Touches, and I think you are right.”

Oh! you must admit, mamma, that an involuntary, unconscious stab like that would have decided you to find out if your happiness rested on such a frail foundation that it would perish at a mere touch. To do Calyste justice, he never proposed to me to visit that hermitage, now his property. But as soon as we love we are creatures devoid of common-sense, and this

silence, this reserve piqued me ; so I said to him one day : “ What are you afraid of at Les Touches, that you alone never speak of the place ? ”

“ Let us go there,” he replied.

So there I was *caught*,— like other women who want to be caught, and who trust to chance to cut the Gordian knot of their indecision. So to Les Touches we went.

It is enchanting, in a style profoundly artistic. I took delight in that place of horror where Mademoiselle des Touches had so earnestly forbidden me to go. Poisonous flowers are all charming ; Satan sowed them — for the devil has flowers as well as God ; we have only to look within our souls to see the two shared in the making of us. What delicious acridity in a situation where I played, not with fire, but — with ashes ! I studied Calyste ; the point was to know if that passion was thoroughly extinct. I watched, as you may well believe, every wind that blew ; I kept an eye upon his face as he went from room to room and from one piece of furniture to another, exactly like a child who is looking for some hidden thing. Calyste seemed thoughtful, but at first I thought that I had vanquished the past. I felt strong enough to mention Madame de Rochefide — whom in my heart I called la Rocheperfide. At last we went to see the famous bush where Béatrix was caught when he flung her into the sea that she might never belong to another man.

“ She must be light indeed to have stayed there,” I said laughing. Calyste kept silence, so I added, “ We ’ll respect the dead.”

Still Calyste was silent.

“ Have I displeased you ? ” I asked.

“No; but cease to galvanize that passion,” he answered.

What a speech! Calyste, when he saw me all cast down by it, redoubled his care and tenderness.

August.

I WAS, alas! at the edge of a precipice, amusing myself, like the innocent heroines of all melodramas, by gathering flowers. Suddenly a horrible thought rode full tilt through my happiness, like the horse in the German ballad. I thought I saw that Calyste's love was increasing through his reminiscences; that he was expending on *me* the stormy emotions I revived by reminding him of the coquetries of that hateful Béatrix, — just think of it! that cold, unhealthy nature, so persistent yet so flabby, something between a mollusk and a bit of coral, dares to call itself Béatrix, *Beatrice!*

Already, dearest mother, I am forced to keep one eye open to suspicion, when my heart is all Calyste's; and is n't it a great catastrophe when the eye gets the better of the heart, and suspicion at last finds itself justified? It came to pass in this way: —

“This place is dear to me,” I said to Calyste one morning, “because I owe my happiness to it; and so I forgive you for taking me sometimes for another woman.”

The loyal Breton blushed, and I threw my arms around his neck. But all the same I have left Les Touches, and never will I go back there again.

The very strength of hatred which makes me long for Madame de Rochefide's death — ah, heavens! a natural death, pleurisy, or some accident — makes me also

understand to its full extent the power of my love for Calyste. That woman has appeared to me to trouble my sleep, — I see her in a dream; shall I ever encounter her bodily? Ah! the postulant of the Visitation was right, — Les Touches is a fatal spot; Calyste has there recovered his past emotions, and they are, I see it plainly, more powerful than the joys of our love. Ascertain, my dear mamma, if Madame de Rochefide is in Paris, for if she is, I shall stay in Brittany. Poor Mademoiselle des Touches might well repent of her share in our marriage if she knew to what extent I am taken for our odious rival! But this is prostitution! I am not myself; I am ashamed of it all. A frantic desire seizes me sometimes to fly from Guérande and those sands of Croisic.

August 25th.

I AM determined to go and live in the ruins of the old château. Calyste, worried by my restlessness, agrees to take me. Either he knows life so little that he guesses nothing, or he *does* know the cause of my flight, in which case he cannot love me. I tremble so with fear lest I find the awful certainty I seek that, like a child, I put my hands before my eyes not to hear the explosion —

Oh, mother! I am not loved with the love that I feel in my heart. Calyste is charming to me, that's true; but what man, unless he were a monster, would not be, as Calyste is, amiable and gracious when receiving all the flowers of the soul of a young girl of twenty, brought up by you, pure, loving, and beautiful, as many women have said to you that I am,

GUÉNIC, September 18.

HAS he forgotten her? That's the solitary thought which echoes through my soul like a remorse. Ah! dear mamma, have all women to struggle against memories as I do? None but innocent young men should be married to pure young girls. But that's a deceptive Utopia; better have one's rival in the past than in the future.

Ah! mother, pity me, though at this moment I am happy as a woman who fears to lose her happiness and so clings fast to it,—one way of killing it, says that profoundly wise Clotilde.

I notice that for the last five months I think only of myself, that is, of Calyste. Tell sister Clotilde that her melancholy bits of wisdom often recur to me. She is happy in being faithful to the dead; she fears no rival. A kiss to my dear Athénaïs, about whom I see Juste is beside himself. From what you told me in your last letter it is evident he fears you will not give her to him. Cultivate that fear as a precious product. Athénaïs will be sovereign lady; but I who fear lest I can never win Calyste from himself shall always be a servant.

A thousand tendernesses, dear mamma. Ah! if my terrors are not delusions, Camille Maupin has sold me her fortune dearly. My affectionate respects to papa.

These letters give a perfect explanation of the secret relation between husband and wife. Sabine thought of a love marriage where Calyste saw only a marriage of expediency. The joys of the honey-moon had not altogether conformed to the legal requirements of the social system.

During the stay of the married pair in Brittany the work of restoring and furnishing the hôtel du Guénic had been carried on by the celebrated architect Grindot, under the superintendence of Clotilde and the Duc and Duchesse de Grandlien, all arrangements having been made for the return of the young household to Paris in December, 1838. Sabine installed herself in the rue de Bourbon with pleasure,—less for the satisfaction of playing mistress of a great household than for that of knowing what her family would think of her marriage.

Calyste, with easy indifference, was quite willing to let his sister-in-law Clotilde and his mother-in-law the duchess guide him in all matters of social life, and they were both very grateful for his obedience. He obtained the place in society which was due to his name, his fortune, and his alliance. The success of his wife, who was regarded as one of the most charming women in Paris, the diversions of high society, the duties to be fulfilled, the winter amusements of the great city, gave a certain fresh life to the happiness of the young household by producing a series of excitements and interludes. Sabine, considered happy by her mother and sister, who saw in Calyste's coolness an effect of his English education, cast aside her gloomy notions; she heard her lot so envied by many unhappily married women that she drove her terrors from her into the region of chimeras, until the time when her pregnancy gave additional guarantees to this neutral sort of union, guarantees which are usually angured well of by experienced women. In October, 1839, the young Baronne du Guénic had a son, and committed the mistake of nursing it herself, on the theory of most women in such

cases. How is it possible, they think, not to be wholly the mother of the child of an idolized husband?

Toward the end of the following summer, in August, 1840, Sabine had nearly reached the period when the duty of nursing her first child would come to an end. Calyste, during his two years' residence in Paris, had completely thrown off that innocence of mind the charm of which had so adorned his earliest appearance in the world of passion. He was now the comrade of the young Duc Georges de Maufriigneuse, lately married, like himself, to an heiress, Berthe de Cinq-Cygne; of the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, the Duc and Duchesse de Rhétoré, the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and all the *habitués* of his mother-in-law's salon; and he fully understood by this time the differences that separated Parisian life from the life of the provinces. Wealth has fatal hours, hours of leisure and idleness, which Paris knows better than all other capitals how to amuse, charm, and divert. Contact with those young husbands who deserted the noblest and sweetest of creatures for the delights of a cigar and whist, for the glorious conversations of a club, or the excitements of "the turf," undermined before long many of the domestic virtues of the young Breton noble. The motherly solicitude of a wife who is anxious not to weary her husband always comes to the support of the dissipations of young men. A wife is so proud to see a husband return to her when she has allowed him full liberty of action.

One evening, in October of that year, to escape the crying of the newly weaned child, Calyste, on whose forehead Sabine could not endure to see a frown, went,

urged by her, to the Variétés, where a new play was to be given for the first time. The footman whose business it was to engage a stall had taken it quite near to that part of the theatre which is called the *avant-scène*. As Calyste looked about him during the first interlude, he saw in one of the two proscenium boxes on his side, and not ten steps from him, Madame de Rochefide. Béatrix in Paris! Béatrix in public! The two thoughts flew through Calyste's heart like arrows. To see her again after nearly three years! How shall we depict the convulsion in the soul of this lover, who, far from forgetting the past, had sometimes substituted Béatrix for his wife so plainly that his wife had perceived it? To whom can we explain that the poem of a lost love rejected but still living in the heart of Sabine's husband dimmed in that heart the conjugal graces, the ineffable tenderness of the young wife? Béatrix was light, life, motion, and the Unknown. Sabine was duty, dulness, and the expected. One became, in a moment, pleasure; the other, weariness. It was the falling of a thunderbolt.

From a sense of loyalty, the first thought of Sabine's husband was to leave the theatre. As he left the door of the orchestra stalls, he saw the door of the proscenium box half-open, and his feet took him there in spite of his will. The young Breton found Béatrix between two very distinguished men, Canalis and Raoul Nathan, a statesman and a man of letters. In the three years since Calyste had seen her, Madame de Rochefide was amazingly changed; and yet, although the transformation had seriously affected her as a woman, she was only the more poetic and the more

attractive to Calyste. Until the age of thirty the pretty women of Paris ask nothing more of their toilet than clothing; but after they pass through the fatal porch of the thirties, they look for weapons, seductions, embellishments among their *chiffons*; out of these they compose charms, they find means, they take a style, they seize youth, they study the slightest accessory, — in a word, they pass from nature to art.

Madame de Rochefide had just come through the vicissitudes of a drama which, in this history of the manners and morals of France in the nineteenth century may be called that of the Deserted Woman. Deserted by Conti, she became, naturally, a great artist in dress, in coquetry, in artificial flowers of all kinds.

“Why is Conti not here?” inquired Calyste in a low voice of Canalis, after going through the commonplace civilities with which even the most solemn interviews begin when they take place publicly.

The former great poet of the faubourg Saint-Germain, twice a cabinet minister, and now for the fourth time an orator in the Chamber, and aspiring to another ministry, laid a warning finger significantly on his lip. That gesture explained everything.

“I am happy to see you,” said Béatrix, demurely. “I said to myself when I recognized you just now, before you saw me, that *you* at least would not disown me. Ah! my Calyste,” she added in a whisper, “why did you marry? — and with such a little fool!”

As soon as a woman whispers in the ear of a newcomer and makes him sit beside her, men of the world find an immediate excuse for leaving the pair alone together.

“Come, Nathan,” said Canalis, “Madame la marquise will, I am sure, allow me to go and say a word to d’Arthèz, whom I see over there with the Princesse de Cadignan; it relates to some business in the Chamber to-morrow.”

This well-bred departure gave Calyste time to recover from the shock he had just received; but he nearly lost both his strength and his senses once more, as he inhaled the perfume, to him entrancing though venomous, of the poem composed by Béatrix. Madame de Rochefide, now become bony and gaunt, her complexion faded and almost discolored, her eyes hollow with deep circles, had that evening brightened those premature ruins by the cleverest contrivances of the *article Paris*. She had taken it into her head, like other deserted women, to assume a virgin air, and recall by clouds of white material the maidens of Ossian, so poetically painted by Girodet. Her fair hair draped her elongated face with a mass of curls, among which rippled the rays of the foot-lights attracted by the shining of a perfumed oil. Her white brow sparkled. She had applied an imperceptible tinge of rouge to her cheeks, upon the faded whiteness of a skin revived by bran and water. A scarf so delicate in texture that it made one doubt if human fingers could have fabricated such gossamer, was wound about her throat to diminish its length, and partly conceal it; leaving imperfectly visible the treasures of the bust which were cleverly inclosed in a corset. Her figure was indeed a masterpiece of composition.

As for her pose, one word will suffice—it was worthy of the pains she had taken to arrange it. Her arms, now thin and hard, were scarcely visible

within the puffings of her very large sleeves. She presented that mixture of false glitter and brilliant fabrics, of silken gauze and craped hair, of vivacity, calmness, and motion which goes by the term of the *Je ne sais quoi*. Everybody knows in what that consists, namely: great cleverness, some taste, and a certain composure of manner. Béatrix might now be called a decorative scenic effect, changed at will, and wonderfully manipulated. The presentation of this fairy effect, to which is added clever dialogue, turns the heads of men who are endowed by nature with frankness, until they become possessed, through the law of contrasts, by a frantic desire to play with artifice. It is false, though enticing; a pretence, but agreeable; and certain men adore women who play at seduction as others do at cards. And this is why. The desire of the man is a syllogism which draws conclusions from this external science as to the secret promises of pleasure. The inner consciousness says, without words: "A woman who can, as it were, create herself beautiful must have many other resources for love." And that is true. Deserted women are usually those who merely love; those who retain love know the *art* of loving. Now, though her Italian lesson had very cruelly maltreated the self-love and vanity of Madame de Rochefide, her nature was too instinctively artificial not to profit by it.

"It is not a question of loving a man," she was saying a few moments before Calyste had entered her box; "we must tease and harass him if we want to keep him. That's the secret of all those women who seek to retain you men. The dragons who guard treasures are always armed with claws and wings."

“I shall make a sonnet on that thought,” replied Canalis at the very moment when Calyste entered the box.

With a single glance Béatrix divined the state of Calyste’s heart; she saw the marks of the collar she had put upon him at Les Touches, still fresh and red. Calyste, however, wounded by the speech made to him about his wife, hesitated between his dignity as a husband, Sabine’s defence, and a harsh word cast upon a heart which held such memories for him, a heart which he believed to be bleeding. The marquise observed his hesitation; she had made that speech expressly that she might know how far her empire over Calyste still extended. Seeing his weakness, she came at once to his succor to relieve his embarrassment.

“Well, dear friend, you find me alone,” she said, as soon as the two gentlemen had left the box, — “yes, alone in the world.”

“You forget me!” said Calyste.

“You!” she replied, “but you are married. That was one of my griefs, among the many I have endured since I saw you last. Not only — I said to myself — do I lose love, but I have lost a friendship which I thought was Breton. Alas! we can make ourselves bear everything. Now I suffer less, but I am broken, exhausted! This is the first outpouring of my heart for a long, long time. Obligated to seem proud before indifferent persons, and arrogant as if I had never fallen in presence of those who pay court to me, and having lost my dear Félicité, there was no ear into which I could cast the words, *I suffer!* But to you I can tell the anguish I endured on seeing you just now

so near to me. Yes," she said, replying to a gesture of Calyste's, "it is almost fidelity. That is how it is with misery; a look, a visit, a mere nothing is everything to us. Ah! you once loved me — you — as I deserved to be loved by him who has taken pleasure in trampling under foot the treasures I poured out upon him. And yet, to my sorrow, I cannot forget; I love, and I desire to be faithful to a past that can never return."

Having uttered this tirade, improvised for the hundredth time, she played the pupils of her eyes in a way to double the effect of her words, which seemed to be dragged from the depths of her soul by the violence of a torrent long restrained. Calyste, incapable of speech, let fall the tears that gathered in his eyes. Béatrix caught his hand and pressed it, making him turn pale.

"Thank you, Calyste, thank you, my poor child; that is how a true friend responds to the grief of his friend. We understand each other. No, don't add another word; leave me now; people are looking at us; it might cause trouble to your wife if some one chanced to tell her that we were seen together, — innocently enough, before a thousand people! There, you see I am strong; adieu —"

She wiped her eyes, making what might be called, in woman's rhetoric, an antithesis of action.

"Let me laugh the laugh of a lost soul with the careless creatures who amuse me," she went on. "I live among artists, writers, in short the world I knew in the salon of our poor Camille — who may indeed have acted wisely. To enrich the man we love and then to disappear saying, 'I am too old for him!' that is

ending like the martyrs, — and the best end too, if one cannot die a virgin.”

She began to laugh, as if to remove the melancholy impression she had made upon her former adorer.

“But,” said Calyste, “where can I go to see you?”

“I am hidden in the rue de Chartres opposite the Parc de Monceaux, in a little house suitable to my means; and there I cram my head with literature — but only for myself, to distract my thoughts; God keep me from the mania of literary women! Now go, leave me; I must not allow the world to talk of me; what will it not say on seeing us together! Adieu — oh! Calyste, my friend, if you stay another minute I shall burst into tears!”

Calyste withdrew, after holding out his hand to Béatrix and feeling for the second time that strange and deep sensation of a double pressure — full of seductive tingling.

“Sabine never knew how to stir my soul in that way,” was the thought that assailed him in the corridor.

During the rest of the evening the Marquise de Rochefide did not cast three straight glances at Calyste, but there were many sidelong looks which tore the soul of the man now wholly thrown back into his first, repulsed love.

When the baron du Guénie reached home the splendor of his apartments made him think of the sort of mediocrity of which Béatrix had spoken, and he hated his wealth because it could not belong to that fallen angel. When he was told that Sabine had long been in bed he rejoiced to find himself rich in the possession of

a night in which to live over his emotions. He cursed the power of divination which love had bestowed upon Sabine. When by chance a man is adored by his wife, she reads on his face as in a book; she learns every quiver of its muscles, she knows whence comes its calmness, she asks herself the reason of the slightest sadness, seeking to know if haply the cause is in herself; she studies the eyes; for her the eyes are tinted with the dominant thought, — they love or they do not love. Calyste knew himself to be the object of so deep, so naïve, so jealous a worship that he doubted his power to compose a cautious face that should not betray the change in his moral being.

“How shall I manage to-morrow morning?” he said to himself as he went to sleep, dreading the sort of inspection to which Sabine would have recourse. When they came together at night, and sometimes during the day, Sabine would ask him, “Do you still love me?” or, “I don’t weary you, do I?” Charming interrogations, varied according to the nature or the cleverness of women, which hide their anxieties either feigned or real.

To the surface of the noblest and purest hearts the mud and slime cast up by hurricanes must come. So, on that morrow morning, Calyste, who certainly loved his child, quivered with joy on learning that Sabine feared the croup, and was watching for the cause of slight convulsions, not daring to leave her little boy. The baron made a pretext of business and went out, thus avoiding the home breakfast. He escaped as prisoners escape, happy in being afoot, and free to go by the Pont Louis XVI. and the Champs Élysées to a

café on the boulevard where he had liked to breakfast when a bachelor.

What is there in love? Does Nature rebel against the social yoke? Does she need that the impulse of her given life be spontaneous, free, the dash of an impetuous torrent foaming against rocks of opposition and of coquetry, rather than a tranquil stream flowing between the two banks of the church and the legal ceremony? Has she her own designs as she secretly prepares those volcanic eruptions to which, perhaps, we owe great men?

It would be difficult to find a young man more sacredly brought up than Calyste, of purer morals, less stained by irreligion; and yet he bounded toward a woman unworthy of him, when a benign and radiant chance had given him for his wife a young creature whose beauty was truly aristocratic, whose mind was keen and delicate, a pious, loving girl, attached singly to him, of angelic sweetness, and made more tender still by love, a love that was passionate in spite of marriage, like his for Béatrix. Perhaps the noblest men retain some clay in their constitutions; the slough still pleases them. If this be so, the least imperfect human being is the woman, in spite of her faults and her want of reason. Madame de Rochefide, it must be said, amid the circle of poetic pretensions which surrounded her, and in spite of her fall, belonged to the highest nobility; she presented a nature more ethereal than slimy, and hid the courtesan she meant to be beneath an aristocratic exterior. Therefore the above explanation does not fully account for Calyste's strange passion.

Perhaps we ought to look for its cause in a vanity so

deeply buried in the soul that moralists have not yet uncovered that side of vice. There are men, truly noble, like Calyste, handsome as Calyste, rich, distinguished, and well-bred, who tire — without their knowledge, possibly — of marriage with a nature like their own; beings whose own nobleness is not surprised or moved by nobleness in others; whom grandeur and delicacy consonant with their own does not affect; but who seek from inferior or fallen natures the seal of their own superiority — if indeed they do not openly beg for praise. Calyste found nothing to protect in Sabine, she was irreproachable; the powers thus stagnant in his heart were now to vibrate for Béatrix. If great men have played before our eyes the Saviour's part toward the woman taken in adultery, why should ordinary men be wiser in their generation than they?

Calyste reached the hour of two o'clock living on one sentence only, "I shall see her again!" — a poem which has often paid the costs of a journey of two thousand miles. He now went with a light step to the rue de Chartres, and recognized the house at once although he had never before seen it. Once there, he stood — he, the son-in-law of the Duc de Grandlieu, he, rich, noble as the Bourbons — at the foot of the staircase, stopped short by the interrogation of the old footman: "Monsieur's name?" Calyste felt that he ought to leave to Béatrix her freedom of action in receiving or not receiving him; and he waited, looking into the garden, with its walls furrowed by those black and yellow lines produced by rain upon the stucco of Paris.

Madame de Rochefide, like nearly all great ladies

who break their chain, had left her fortune to her husband when she fled from him ; she could not beg from her tyrant. Conti and Mademoiselle des Touches had spared Béatrix all the petty worries of material life, and her mother had frequently sent her considerable sums of money. Finding herself now on her own resources, she was forced to an economy that was rather severe for a woman accustomed to every luxury. She had therefore gone to the summit of the hill on which lies the Parc de Monceaux, and there she had taken refuge in a "little house" formerly belonging to a great seigneur, standing on the street, but possessed of a charming garden, the rent of which did not exceed eighteen hundred francs. Still served by an old footman, a maid, and a cook from Alençon, who were faithful to her throughout her vicissitudes, her penury, as she thought it, would have been opulence to many an ambitious bourgeoisie.

Calyste went up a staircase the steps of which were well puniced and the landings filled with flowering plants. On the first floor the old servant opened, in order to admit the baron into the apartment, a double door of red velvet with lozenges of red silk studded with gilt nails. Silk and velvet furnished the rooms through which Calyste passed. Carpets in grave colors, curtains crossing each other before the windows, portières, in short all things within contrasted with the mean external appearance of the house, which was ill-kept by the proprietor. Calyste awaited Béatrix in a salon of sober character, where all the luxury was simple in style. This room, hung with garnet velvet heightened here and there with dead-gold silken trim-

mings, the floor covered with a dark red carpet, the windows resembling conservatories, with abundant flowers in the jardinières, was lighted so faintly that Calyste could scarcely see on a mantel-shelf two vases of old celadon, between which gleamed a silver cup attributed to Benvenuto Cellini and brought from Italy by Béatrix. The furniture of gilded wood with velvet coverings, the magnificent consoles, on one of which was a curious clock, the table with its Persian cloth, all bore testimony to former opulence, the remains of which had been well applied. On a little table Calyste saw jewelled knick-knaeks, a book in course of reading, in which glittered the handle of a dagger used as a paper-cutter — symbol of criticism! Finally, on the walls, ten water-colors richly framed, each representing one of the diverse bedrooms in which Madame de Rochefide's wandering life had led her to sojourn, gave the measure of what was surely superior impertinence.

The rustle of a silk dress announced the poor unfortunate, who appeared in a studied toilet which would certainly have told a *roué* that his coming was awaited. The gown, made like a wrapper to show the line of a white bosom, was of pearl-gray moire with large open sleeves, from which issued the arms covered with a second sleeve of puffed tulle, divided by straps and trimmed with lace at the wrists. The beautiful hair, which the comb held insecurely, escaped from a cap of lace and flowers.

“Already!” she said, smiling. “A lover could not have shown more eagerness. You must have secrets to tell me, have you not?”

And she posed herself gracefully on a sofa, inviting

Calyste by a gesture to sit beside her. By chance (a selected chance, possibly, for women have two memories, that of angels and that of devils) Béatrix was redolent of the perfume which she used at Les Touches during her first acquaintance with Calyste. The inhaling of this scent, contact with that dress, the glance of those eyes, which in the semi-darkness gathered the light and returned it, turned Calyste's brain. The luckless man was again impelled to that violence which had once before almost cost Béatrix her life; but this time the marquise was on the edge of a sofa, not on that of a rock; she rose to ring the bell, laying a finger on her lips. Calyste, recalled to order, controlled himself, all the more because he saw that Béatrix had no inimical intention.

“Antoine, I am not at home — for every one,” she said. “Put some wood on the fire. You see, Calyste, that I treat you as a friend,” she continued with dignity, when the old man had left the room; “therefore do not treat me as you would a mistress. I have two remarks to make to you. In the first place, I should not deny myself foolishly to any man I really loved; and secondly, I am determined to belong to no other man on earth, for I believed, Calyste, that I was loved by a species of Rizzio, whom no engagement trammelled, a man absolutely free, and you see to what that fatal confidence has led me. As for you, you are now under the yoke of the most sacred of duties; you have a young, amiable, delightful wife; moreover, you are a father. I should be, as you are, without excuse — we should be two fools —”

“My dear Béatrix, all these reasons vanish before a

single word—I have never loved but you on earth, and I was married against my will.”

“ Ah! a trick played upon us by Mademoiselle des Touches,” she said, smiling.

Three hours passed, during which Madame de Rochefide held Calyste to the consideration of conjugal faith, pointing out to him the horrible alternative of an utter renunciation of Sabine. Nothing else could reassure her, she said, in the dreadful situation to which Calyste’s love would reduce her. Then she affected to regard the sacrifice of Sabine as a small matter, she knew her so well!

“ My dear child,” she said, “ that’s a woman who fulfils all the promises of her girlhood. She is a Grand-lieu, to be sure, but she’s as brown as her mother the Portuguese, not to say yellow, and as dry and stiff as her father. To tell the truth, your wife will never go wrong; she’s a big boy who can take care of herself. Poor Calyste! is that the sort of woman you needed? She has fine eyes, but such eyes are very common in Italy and in Spain and Portugal. Can any woman be tender with bones like hers. Eve was fair; brown women descend from Adam, blondes come from the hand of God, which left upon Eve his last thought after he had created her.”

About six o’clock Calyste, driven to desperation, took his hat to depart.

“ Yes, go, my poor friend,” she said; “ don’t give her the annoyance of dining without you.”

Calyste stayed. At his age it was so easy to snare him on his worst side.

“ What! you dare to dine with me?” said **Béatrix**,

playing a provocative amazement. "My poor food does not alarm you? Have you enough independence of soul to crown me with joy by this little proof of your affection?"

"Let me write a note to Sabine; otherwise she will wait dinner for me till nine o'clock."

"Here," said Béatrix, "this is the table at which I write."

She lighted the candles herself, and took one to the table to look over what he was writing.

"*My dear Sabine —*"

"'My dear'? — can you really say that your wife is still dear to you?" she asked, looking at him with a cold eye that froze the very marrow of his bones. "Go, — you had better go and dine with her."

"*I dine at a restaurant with some friends.*"

"A lie. Oh, fy! you are not worthy to be loved either by her or by me. Men are all cowards in their treatment of women. Go, monsieur, go and dine with your dear Sabine."

Calyste flung himself back in his arm-chair and became as pale as death. Bretons possess a courage of nature which makes them obstinate under difficulties. Presently the young baron sat up, put his elbow on the table, his chin in his hand, and looked at the implacable Béatrix with a flashing eye. He was so superb that a Northern woman or a Southern woman would have fallen at his feet saying, "Take me!" But Béatrix, born on the borders of Normandy and Brittany, belonged to the race of Castérans; desertion had developed in her the ferocity of the Frank, the spitefulness of the Norman; she wanted some terrible

notoriety as a vengeance, and she yielded to no weakness.

“Dictate what I ought to write,” said the luckless man. “But, in that case —”

“Well, yes!” she said, “you shall love me then as you loved me at Guérande. Write: *I dine out; do not expect me.*”

“What next?” said Calyste, thinking something more would follow.

“Nothing; sign it. “Good,” she said, darting on the note with restrained joy. “I will send it by a messenger.”

“And now,” cried Calyste, rising like a happy man.

“Ah! I have kept, I believe, my freedom of action,” she said, turning away from him and going to the fireplace, where she rang the bell. “Here, Antoine,” she said, when the old footman entered, “send this note to its address. Monsieur dines here.”

XIX.

THE FIRST LIE OF A PIOUS DUCHESS.

CALYSTE returned to his own house about two in the morning. After waiting for him till half-past twelve, Sabine had gone to bed overwhelmed with fatigue. She slept, although she was keenly distressed by the laconic wording of her husband's note. Still, she explained it. The true love of a woman invariably begins by explaining all things to the advantage of the man beloved. Calyste was pressed for time, she said.

The next morning the child was better; the mother's uneasiness subsided, and Sabine came with a smiling face, and little Calyste on her arm, to present him to his father before breakfast with the pretty fooleries and senseless words which gay young mothers do and say. This little scene gave Calyste the chance to maintain a countenance. He was charming to his wife, thinking in his heart that he was a monster, and he played like a child with Monsieur le chevalier; in fact he played too well, — he overdid the part; but Sabine had not reached the stage at which a woman recognizes so delicate a distinction.

At breakfast, however, she asked him suddenly: —

“What did you do yesterday?”

“Portenduère kept me to dinner,” he replied, “and after that we went to the club to play whist.”

“That’s a foolish life, my Calyste,” said Sabine. “Young noblemen in these days ought to busy themselves about recovering in the eyes of the country the ground lost by their fathers. It isn’t by smoking cigars, playing whist, idling away their leisure, and saying insolent things of parvenus who have driven them from their positions, nor yet by separating themselves from the masses whose soul and intellect and providence they ought to be, that the nobility will exist. Instead of being a party, you will soon be a mere opinion, as de Marsay said. Ah! if you only knew how my ideas on this subject have enlarged since I have nursed and cradled your child! I’d like to see that grand old name of Guénic become once more historical!” Then suddenly plunging her eyes into those of Calyste, who was listening to her with a pensive air, she added: “Admit that the first note you ever wrote me was rather stiff.”

“I did not think of sending you word till I got to the club.”

“But you wrote on a woman’s note-paper; it had a perfume of feminine elegance.”

“Those club directors are such dandies!”

The Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife, formerly Mademoiselle Mirouët, had become of late very intimate with the du Guénics, so intimate that they shared their box at the Opera by equal payments. The two young women, Ursula and Sabine, had been won to this friendship by the delightful interchange of counsels, cares, and confidences apropos of their first infants.

While Calyste, a novice in falsehood, was saying to

himself, "I must warn Savinien," Sabine was thinking, "I am sure that paper bore a coronet." This reflection passed through her mind like a flash, and Sabine scolded herself well for having made it. Nevertheless, she resolved to find the paper, which in the midst of her terrors of the night before she had flung into her letter-box.

After breakfast Calyste went out, saying to his wife that he should soon return. Then he jumped into one of those little low carriages with one horse which were just beginning to supersede the inconvenient cabriolet of our ancestors. He drove in a few minutes to the vicomte's house and begged him to do him the service, with rights of return, of fibbing in case Sabine should question the vicomtesse. Thence Calyste, urging his coachman to speed, rushed to the rue de Chartres in order to know how Béatrix had passed the rest of the night. He found that unfortunate just from her bath, fresh, embellished, and breakfasting with a very good appetite. He admired the grace with which his angel ate her boiled eggs, and he marvelled at the beauty of the gold service, a present from a melomaniac lord, for whom Conti had composed a few ballads on *ideas* of the lord, who afterwards published them as his own!

Calyste listened entranced to the witty speeches of his idol, whose great object was to amuse him, until she grew angry and wept when he rose to leave her. He thought he had been there only half an hour, but it was past three before he reached home. His handsome English horse, a present from the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, was so bathed in sweat that it looked as

though it had been driven through the sea. By one of those chances which all jealous women prepare for themselves, Sabine was at a window which looked on the court-yard, impatient at Calyste's non-return, uneasy without knowing why. The condition of the horse with its foaming mouth surprised her.

“Where can he have come from?”

The question was whispered in her ear by that power which is not exactly consciousness, nor devil, nor angel; which sees, forebodes, shows us the unseen, and creates belief in mental beings, creatures born of our brains, going and coming and living in the world invisible of ideas.

“Where do you come from, dear angel?” Sabine said to Calyste, meeting him on the first landing of the staircase. “Abd-el-Kader is nearly foundered. You told me you would be gone but a moment, and I have been waiting for you these three hours.”

“Well, well,” thought Calyste, who was making progress in dissimulation, “I must get out of it by a present — *Déar little mother*,” he said aloud, taking her round the waist with more cajolery than he would have used if he had not been conscious of guilt, “I see that it is quite impossible to keep a secret, however innocent, from the woman who loves us — ”

“Well, don't tell secrets on the staircase,” she said, laughing. “Come in.”

In the middle of a salon which adjoined their bedroom, she caught sight in a mirror of Calyste's face, on which, not aware that it could be seen, he allowed his real feelings and his weariness to appear.

“Now for your secret?” she said, turning round.

“ You have shown such heroism as a nurse,” he said, “ that the heir presumptive of the Gnénics is dearer to me than ever, and I wanted to give you a surprise, precisely like any bourgeois of the rue Saint Denis. They are finishing for you at this moment a dressing-table at which true artists have worked, and my mother and aunt Zéphirine have contributed.”

Sabine clasped him in her arms, and held him tightly to her breast with her head on his neck, faint with the weight of happiness, not for the piece of furniture, but for the dispersion of her first dark doubt. It was one of those magnificent transports which can be counted, and which no love, however excessive, can prodigally spend, or life would be too soon burned out. Then, indeed, men should fall at the feet of women to adore them, for such moments are sublime, moments when the forces of the heart and intellect gush forth like the waters of sculptured nymphs from their inclining urns. Sabine burst into tears.

Suddenly as if bitten by a viper, she left Calysté, threw herself on a sofa and fainted away, for the reaction of a chill to her glowing heart came near to killing her. As she held Calyste in her arms, her nose at his cravat, abandoned to her joy, she smelt the perfume of that letter paper! Another woman's head had lain there, whose hair and face had left that adulterous odor! She had just kissed the spot where the kisses of her rival were still warm.

“ What is the matter? ” asked Calyste, after he had brought Sabine back to consciousness by passing a damp cloth over her face and making her smell salts.

“ Fetch the doctor and my nurse, both! Yes, my

milk has turned, I feel it. They won't come at once unless you fetch them yourself — go !”

Calyste, alarmed, rushed out. The moment Sabine heard the closing of the porte-cochère she started up like a frightened doe, and walked about the salon as if beside herself, crying out, “ My God ! my God ! my God ! ”

Those two words took the place of all ideas. The crisis she had seized upon as a pretext in reality took place. The hairs of her head were like so many red-hot needles heated in the fire of a nervous fever. Her boiling blood seemed to her to mingle with her nerves and yet to try to issue from all her pores. She was blind for a few moments, and cried aloud, “ I am dying ! ”

At that terrible cry of the injured wife and mother her maid ran in. After she was laid upon her bed and recovered both sight and mind, the first act of her intelligence was to send the maid to her friend, Madame de Portenduère. Sabine felt that her ideas were whirling in her brain like straws at the will of a waterspout. “ I saw,” she said later, “ myriads all at once.”

She rang for the footman and in the transport of her fever she found strength to write the following letter, for she was mastered by one mad desire — to have certainty : —

To Madame la Baronne du Guénic :

DEAR MAMMA, — When you come to Paris, as you allow us to hope you will, I shall thank you in person for the beautiful present by which you and my aunt Zéphirine and Calyste wish to reward me for doing my duty. I was already well repaid by my own happiness in doing

it. I can never express the pleasure you have given me in that beautiful dressing-table, but when you are with me I shall try to do so. Believe me, when I array myself before that treasure, I shall think, like the Roman matron, that my noblest jewel is our little angel, etc.

She directed the letter to Guérande and gave it to the footman to post.

When the Vicomtesse de Portenduère came, the shuddering chill of reaction had succeeded in poor Sabine this first paroxysm of madness.

“Ursula, I think I am going to die,” she said.

“What is the matter, dear?”

“Where did Savinien and Calyste go after they dined with you yesterday?”

“Dined with me?” said Ursula, to whom her husband had said nothing, not expecting such immediate inquiry. “Savinien and I dined alone together and went to the Opera without Calyste.”

“Ursula, dearest, in the name of your love for Savinien, keep silence about what you have just said to me and what I shall now tell you. You alone shall know why I die — I am betrayed! at the end of three years, at twenty-two years of age!”

Her teeth chattered, her eyes were dulled and frozen, her face had taken on the greenish tinge of an old Venetian mirror.

“You! so beautiful! For whom?”

“I don’t know yet. But Calyste has told me two lies. Do not pity me, do not seem incensed, pretend ignorance and perhaps you can find out who *she is* through Savinien. Oh! that letter of yesterday!”

Trembling, shaking, she sprang from her bed to a piece of furniture from which she took the letter.

“ See,” she said, lying down again, “ the coronet of a marquise ! Find out if Madame de Rochefide has returned to Paris. Am I to have a heart in which to weep and moan ? Oh, dearest ! — to see one’s beliefs, one’s poesy, idol, virtue, happiness, all, all in pieces, withered, lost ! No God in the sky ! no love upon earth ! no life in my heart ! no anything ! I don’t know if there’s daylight ; I doubt the sun. I’ve such anguish in my soul I scarcely feel the horrible sufferings in my body. Happily, the baby is weaned ; my milk would have poisoned him.”

At that idea the tears began to flow from Sabine’s eyes which had hitherto been dry.

Pretty Madame de Portenduère, holding in her hand the fatal letter, the perfume of which Sabine again inhaled, was at first stupefied by this true sorrow, shocked by this agony of love, without as yet understanding it, in spite of Sabine’s incoherent attempts to relate the facts. Suddenly Ursula was illuminated by one of those ideas which come to none but sincere friends.

“ I must save her ! ” she thought to herself. “ Trust me, Sabine,” she cried. “ Wait for my return ; I will find out the truth.”

“ Ah ! in my grave I’ll love you,” exclaimed Sabine.

The viscountess went straight to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, pledged her to secrecy, and then explained to her fully her daughter’s situation.

“ Madame,” she said as she ended, “ do you not think with me, that in order to avoid some fatal illness — perhaps, I don’t know, even madness — we had better con-

vide the whole truth to the doctor, and invent some tale to clear that hateful Calyste and make him seem for the time being innocent?"

"My dear child," said the duchess, who was chilled to the heart by this confidence, "friendship has given you for the moment the experience of a woman of my age. I know how Sabine loves her husband; you are right, she might become insane."

"Or lose her beauty, which would be worse," said the viscountess.

"Let us go to her!" cried the duchess.

Fortunately they arrived a few moments before the famous *accoucheur*, Dommanget, the only one of the two men of science whom Calyste had been able to find.

"Ursula has told me everything," said the duchess to her daughter, "and you are mistaken. In the first place, Madame de Rochefide is not in Paris. As for what your husband did yesterday, my dear, I can tell you that he lost a great deal of money at cards, so that he does not even know how to pay for your dressing-table."

"But *that*?" said Sabine, holding out to her mother the fatal letter.

"That!" said the duchess, laughing; "why, that is written on the Jockey-Club paper; everybody writes nowadays on coroneted paper; even our stewards will soon be titled."

The prudent mother threw the unlucky paper into the fire as she spoke.

When Calyste and Dommanget arrived, the duchess, who had given instructions to the servants, was at once informed. She left Sabine to the care of Madame de

Portenduère and stopped the *accoucheur* and Calyste in the salon.

“Sabine’s life is at stake, monsieur,” she said to Calyste; “you have betrayed her for Madame de Rochefide.”

Calyste blushed, like a girl still respectable, detected in a fault.

“And,” continued the duchess, “as you do not know how to deceive, you have behaved in such a clumsy manner that Sabine has guessed the truth. But I have for the present repaired your blunder. You do not wish the death of my daughter, I am sure — All this, Monsieur Dommanget, will put you on the track of her real illness and its cause. As for you, Calyste, an old woman like me understands your error, though she does not pardon it. Such pardons can only be bought by a lifetime of after happiness. If you wish me to esteem you, you must, in the first place, save my daughter; next, you must forget Madame de Rochefide; she is only worth having once. Learn to lie; have the courage of a criminal, and his impudence. I have just told a lie myself, and I shall have to do hard penance for that mortal sin.”

She then told the two men the lies she had invented. The clever physician sitting at the bedside of his patient studied in her symptoms the means of repairing the ill, while he ordered measures the success of which depended on great rapidity of execution. Calyste sitting at the foot of the bed strove to put into his glance an expression of tenderness.

“So it was play which put those black circles round your eyes?” Sabine said to him in a feeble voice.

The words made the doctor, the mother, and the viscountess tremble, and they all three looked at one another covertly. Calyste turned as red as a cherry.

“That’s what comes of nursing a child,” said Dommanget brutally, but cleverly. “Husbands are lonely when separated from their wives, and they go to the club and play. But you need n’t worry over the thirty thousand francs which Monsieur le baron lost last night —”

“Thirty thousand francs!” cried Ursula, in a silly tone.

“Yes, I know it,” replied Dommanget. “They told me this morning at the house of the young Duchesse Berthe de Manfrigneuse that it was Monsieur de Trailles who won that money from you,” he added, turning to Calyste. “Why do you play with such men? Frankly, Monsieur le baron, I can well believe you are ashamed of it.”

Seeing his mother-in-law, a pious duchess, the young viscountess, a happy woman, and the old *accoucheur*, a confirmed egotist, all three lying like a dealer in bric-à-brac, the kind and feeling Calyste understood the greatness of the danger, and two heavy tears rolled from his eyes and completely deceived Sabine.

“Monsieur,” she said, sitting up in bed and looking angrily at Dommanget, “Monsieur du Guénic can lose thirty, fifty, a hundred thousand francs if it pleases him, without any one having a right to think it wrong or read him a lesson. It is far better that Monsieur de Trailles should win his money than that we should win Monsieur de Trailles’.”

Calyste rose, took his wife round the neck, kissed her on both cheeks and whispered: —

“Sabine, you are an angel!”

Two days later the young wife was thought to be out of danger, and the next day Calyste was at Madame de Rochefide’s making a merit of his infamy.

“Béatrix,” he said, “you owe me happiness. I have sacrificed my poor little wife to you; she has discovered all. That fatal paper on which you made me write, bore your name and your coronet, which I never noticed — I saw but you! Fortunately the ‘B’ was by chance effaced. But the perfume you left upon me and the lies in which I involved myself like a fool have betrayed my happiness. Sabine nearly died of it; her milk went to the head; erysipelas set in, and possibly she may bear the marks for the rest of her days.”

As Béatrix listened to this tirade her face was due North, icy enough to freeze the Seine had she looked at it.

“So much the better,” she said; “perhaps it will whiten her for you.”

And Beatrix, now become as hard as her bones, sharp as her voice, harsh as her complexion, continued a series of atrocious sarcasms in the same tone. There is no greater blunder than for a man to talk of his wife, if she is virtuous, to his mistress, unless it be to talk of his mistress, if she is beautiful, to his wife. But Calyste had not received that species of Parisian education which we must call the politeness of the passions. He knew neither how to lie to his wife, nor how to tell his mistress the truth, — two apprenticeships a man in his position must make in order to manage women. He was therefore compelled to employ all the power of passion to obtain from Béatrix a pardon which she

forced him to solicit for two hours ; a pardon refused by an injured angel who raised her eyes to the ceiling that she might not see the guilty man, and who put forth reasons sacred to marquises in a voice quivering with tears which were furtively wiped with the lace of her handkerchief.

.. “ To speak to me of your wife on the very day after my fall ! ” she cried. “ Why do you not tell me she is a pearl of virtue ? I know she thinks you handsome ; pure depravity ! I, I love your soul ! for let me tell you, my friend, you are ugly compared to many shepherds on the Campagna of Rome,” etc., etc.

Such speeches may surprise the reader, but they were part of a system profoundly meditated by Béatrix in this her third incarnation, — for at each passion a woman becomes another being and advances one step more into profligacy, the only word which properly renders the effect of the experience given by such adventures. Now, the Marquise de Rochefide had sat in judgment on herself before the mirror. Clever women are never deceived about themselves ; they count their wrinkles, they assist at the birth of their crow’s-feet, they know themselves by heart, and even own it by the greatness of their efforts at preservation. Therefore to struggle successfully against a splendid young woman, to carry away from her six triumphs a week, Béatrix had recourse to the knowledge and the science of courtesans. Without acknowledging to herself the baseness of this plan, led away to the employment of such means by a Turkish passion for Calyste’s beauty, she had resolved to make him think himself unpleasant, ugly, ill-made, and to behave as if she hated him. No

system is more fruitful with men of a conquering nature. To such natures the presence of repugnance to be vanquished is the renewal of the triumph of the first day on all succeeding days. And it is something even better. It is flattery in the guise of dislike. A man then says to himself, "I am irresistible," or "My love is all-powerful because it conquers her repugnance." If you deny this principle, divined by all coquettes and courtesans throughout all social zones, you may as well reject all seekers after knowledge, all delvers into secrets, repulsed through years in their duel with hidden causes. Béatrix added to the use of contempt as a moral piston, a constant comparison of her own poetic, comfortable home with the hôtel du Guénic. All deserted wives who abandon themselves in despair, neglect also their surroundings, so discouraged are they. On this, Madame de Rochefide counted, and presently began an underhand attack on the luxury of the faubourg Saint-Germain, which she characterized as stupid.

The scene of reconciliation, in which Béatrix made Calyste swear and reswear hatred to the wife, who, she said, was playing comedy, took place in a perfect bower where she played off her graces amid ravishing flowers, and rare plants of the costliest luxury. The science of nothings, the trifles of the day, she carried to excess. Fallen into a mortifying position through Conti's desertion, Béatrix was determined to have, at any rate, the fame which unprincipled conduct gives. The misfortune of the poor young wife, a rich and beautiful Grandlieu, should be her pedestal.

XX.

A SHORT TREATISE ON CERTAINTY: BUT NOT FROM
PASCAL'S POINT OF VIEW.

WHEN a woman returns to ordinary life after the nursing of her first child she reappears in the world embellished and charming. This phase of maternity, while it rejuvenates the women of a certain age, gives to young women a splendor of freshness, a gay activity, a *brio* of mere existence, — if it is permissible to apply to the body a word which Italy has discovered for the mind. In trying to return to the charming habits of the honeymoon, Sabine discovered that her husband was not the former Calyste. Again she observed him, unhappy girl, instead of resting securely in her happiness. She sought for the fatal perfume, and smelt it. This time she no longer confided in her friend, nor in the mother who had so charitably deceived her. She wanted certainty, and Certainty made no long tarrying. Certainty is never wanting, it is like the sun; and presently shades are asked for to keep it out. It is, in matters of the heart, a repetition of the fable of the woodman calling upon Death, — we soon ask Certainty to leave us blind.

One morning, about two weeks after the first crisis, Sabine received this terrible letter: —

GUÉRANDE.

To Madame la Baronne du Guénic:

MY DEAR DAUGHTER, — Your aunt Zéphirine and I are lost in conjectures about the dressing-table of which you tell us in your letter. I have written to Calyste about it, and I beg you to excuse our ignorance. You can never doubt our hearts, I am sure. We are piling up riches for you here. Thanks to the advice of Mademoiselle de Pen Hoël on the management of your property, you will find yourself within a few years in possession of a considerable capital without losing any of your income.

Your letter, dear child as dearly loved as if I had borne you in my bosom and fed you with my milk, surprised me by its brevity, and above all by your silence about my dearest little Calyste. You told me nothing of the great Calyste either; but then, I know that *he* is happy," etc., etc.

Sabine wrote across this letter these words, "Noble Brittany does not always lie." She then laid the paper on Calyste's desk.

Calyste found the letter and read it. Seeing Sabine's sentence and recognizing her handwriting he flung the letter into the fire, determined to pretend that he had never received it. Sabine spent a whole week in an agony the secrets of which are known only to angelic or solitary souls whom the wing of the bad angel has never overshadowed. Calyste's silence terrified her.

"I, who ought to be all gentleness, all pleasure to him, I have displeased him, wounded him! My virtue has made itself hateful. I have no doubt humil-

iated my idol," she said to herself. These thoughts ploughed furrows in her heart. She wanted to ask pardon for her fault, but Certainty let loose upon her other proofs. Grown bold and insolent, Béatrix wrote to Calyste at his own home; Madame du Guénic received the letter, and gave it to her husband without opening it, but she said to him, in a changed voice and with death in her soul: "My friend, that letter is from the Jockey-Club; I recognize both the paper and the perfume."

Calyste colored, and put the letter into his pocket.

"Why don't you read it?"

"I know what it is about."

The young wife sat down. No longer did fever burn her, she wept no more; but madness such as, in feeble beings, gives birth to miracles of crime, madness which lays hands on arsenic for themselves or for their rivals, possessed her. At this moment little Calyste was brought in, and she took him in her arms to dance him. The child, just awakened, sought the breast beneath the gown.

"He remembers, — he, at any rate," she said in a low voice.

Calyste went to his own room to read his letter. When he was no longer present the poor young woman burst into tears, and wept as women weep when they are all alone.

Pain, as well as pleasure, has its initiation. The first crisis, like that in which poor Sabine so nearly succumbed, returns no more than the first fruits of other things return. It is the first wedge struck in the torture of the heart; all others are expected, the shock

to the nerves is known, the capital of our forces has been already drawn upon for vigorous resistance. So Sabine, sure of her betrayal, spent three hours with her son in her arms beside the fire in a way that surprised herself, when Gasselin, turned into a footman, came to say: —

“Madame is served.”

“Let monsieur know.”

“Monsieur does not dine at home, Madame la baronne.”

Who knows what torture there is for a young woman of twenty-three in finding herself alone in the great dining-room of an old mansion, served by silent servants, under circumstances like these?

“Order the carriage,” she said suddenly; “I shall go to the Opera.”

She dressed superbly; she wanted to exhibit herself alone and smiling like a happy woman. In the midst of her remorse for the addition she had made to Madame de Rochefide’s letter she had resolved to conquer, to win back Calyste by loving kindness, by the virtues of a wife, by the gentleness of the paschal lamb. She wished, also, to deceive all Paris. She loved, — loved as courtesans and as angels love, with pride, with humility. But the opera chanced to be “Otello.” When Rubini sang *Il mio cor si divide*, she rushed away. Music is sometimes mightier than actor or poet, the two most powerful of all natures, combined. Savinien de Portenduère accompanied Sabine to the peristyle and put her in the carriage without being able to understand this sudden flight.

Madame du Guénic now entered a phase of suffering

which is peculiar to the aristocracy. Envious, poor, and miserable beings, — when you see on the arms of such women golden serpents with diamond heads, necklaces clasped around their necks, say to yourselves that those vipers sting, those slender bonds burn to the quick through the delicate flesh. All such luxury is dearly bought. In situations like that of Sabine, women curse the pleasures of wealth; they look no longer at the gilding of their salons; the silk of the divans is jute in their eyes, exotic flowers are nettles, perfumes poison, the choicest cookery scrapes their throat like barley-bread, and life becomes as bitter as the Dead Sea.

Two or three examples may serve to show this reaction of luxury upon happiness; so that all those women who have endured it may behold their own experience.

Fully aware now of this terrible rivalry, Sabine studied her husband when he left the house, that she might divine, if possible, the future of his day. With what restrained fury does a woman fling herself upon the red-hot spikes of that savage martyrdom! What delirious joy if she could think he did not go to the rue de Chartres! Calyste returned, and then the study of his forehead, his hair, his eyes, his countenance, his demeanor, gave a horrible interest to mere nothings, to observations pursued even to matters of toilet, in which a woman loses her self-respect and dignity. These fatal investigations, concealed in the depths of her heart, turn sour and rot the delicate roots from which should spring to bloom the azure flowers of sacred confidence, the golden petals of the One only love, with all the perfumes of memory.

One day Calyste looked about him discontentedly; he had stayed at home! Sabine made herself caressing and humble, gay and sparkling.

"You are vexed with me, Calyste; am I not a good wife? What is there here that displeases you?" she asked.

"These rooms are so cold and bare," he replied; "you don't understand arranging things."

"Tell me what is wanting."

"Flowers."

"Ah!" she thought to herself, "Madame de Rochefide likes flowers."

Two days later, the rooms of the hôtel du Guénic had assumed another aspect. No one in Paris could flatter himself to have more exquisite flowers than those that now adorned them.

Some time later Calyste, one evening after dinner, complained of the cold. He twisted about in his chair, declared there was a draught, and seemed to be looking for something. Sabine could not at first imagine what this new fancy signified, she, whose house possessed a calorifère which heated the staircases, antechambers, and passages. At last, after three days' meditation, she came to the conclusion that her rival probably sat surrounded by a screen to obtain the half-lights favorable to faded faces; so Sabine had a screen, but hers was of glass and of Israelitish splendor.

"From what quarter will the next storm come?" she said to herself.

These indirect comparisons with his mistress were not yet at an end. When Calyste dined at home

he ate his dinner in a way to drive Sabine frantic; he would motion to the servants to take away his plates after pecking at two or three mouthfuls.

“Was n’t it good?” Sabine would ask, in despair at seeing all the pains she had taken in conference with her cook thrown away.

“I don’t say that, my angel,” replied Calyste, without anger; “I am not hungry, that is all.”

A woman consumed by a legitimate passion, who struggles thus, falls at last into a fury of desire to get the better of her rival, and often goes too far, even in the most secret regions of married life. So cruel, burning, and incessant a combat in the obvious and, as we may call them, exterior matters of a household must needs become more intense and desperate in the things of the heart. Sabine studied her attitudes, her toilets; she took heed about herself in all the infinitely little trifles of love.

The cooking trouble lasted nearly a month. Sabine, assisted by Mariotte and Gasselin, invented various little vaudeville schemes to ascertain the dishes which Madame de Rochefide served to Calyste. Gasselin was substituted for Calyste’s groom, who had fallen conveniently ill. This enabled Gasselin to consort with Madame de Rochefide’s cook, and before long, Sabine gave Calyste the same fare, only better; but still he made difficulties.

“What is wanting now?” she said.

“Oh, nothing,” he answered, looking round the table for something he did not find.

“Ah!” exclaimed Sabine, as she woke the next morning, “Calyste wanted some of those Indian sauces

they serve in England in cruets. Madame de Rochefide accustoms him to all sorts of condiments."

She bought the English cruets and the spiced sauces; but it soon became impossible for her to make such discoveries in all the preparations invented by her rival.

This period lasted some months; which is not surprising when we remember the sort of attraction presented by such a struggle. It is life. And that is preferable, with its wounds and its anguish, to the gloomy darkness of disgust, to the poison of contempt, to the void of abdication, to that death of the heart which is called indifference. But all Sabine's courage abandoned her one evening when she appeared in a toilet such as women are inspired to wear in the hope of eclipsing a rival, and about which Calyste said, laughing: —

"In spite of all you can do, Sabine, you'll never be anything but a handsome Andalusian."

"Alas!" she said, dropping on a sofa, "I may never make myself a blonde, but I know if this continues I shall soon be thirty-five years old."

She refused to go to the Opera as she intended, and chose to stay at home the whole evening. But once alone she pulled the flowers from her hair and stamped upon them; she tore off the gown and scarf and trampled them underfoot, like a goat caught in the tangle of its tether, which struggles till death comes. Then she went to bed.

XXI.

THE WICKEDNESS OF A GOOD WOMAN.

PLAYING for these terrible stakes Sabine grew thin ; grief consumed her ; but she never for a moment forsook the rôle she had imposed upon herself. Sustained by a sort of fever, her lips drove back into her throat the bitter words that pain suggested ; she repressed the flashing of her glorious dark eyes, and made them soft even to humility. But her failing health soon became noticeable. The duchess, an excellent mother, though her piety was becoming more and more Portuguese, recognized a moral cause in the physically weak condition in which Sabine now took satisfaction. She knew the exact state of the relation between Béatrix and Calyste ; and she took great pains to draw her daughter to her own house, partly to soothe the wounds of her heart, but more especially to drag her away from the scene of her martyrdom. Sabine, however, maintained the deepest silence for a long time about her sorrows, fearing lest some one might meddle between herself and Calyste. She declared herself happy ! At the height of her misery she recovered her pride, and all her virtues.

But at last, after some months during which her sister Clotilde and her mother had caressed and petted

her, she acknowledged her grief, confided her sorrows, cursed life, and declared that she saw death coming with delirious joy. She begged Clotilde, who was resolved to remain unmarried, to be a mother to her little Calyste, the finest child that any royal race could desire for heir presumptive.

One evening, as she sat with her young sister Athénaïs (whose marriage to the Vicomte de Grandlieu was to take place at the end of Lent), and with Clotilde and the duchess, Sabine gave utterance to the supreme cries of her heart's anguish, excited by the pangs of a last humiliation.

“Athénaïs,” she said, when the Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu departed at eleven o'clock, “you are going to marry; let my example be a warning to you. Consider it a crime to display your best qualities; resist the pleasure of adorning yourself to please Juste. Be calm, dignified, cold; measure the happiness you give by that which you receive. This is shameful, but it is necessary. Look at me. I perish through my best qualities. All that I *know* was fine and sacred and grand within me, all my virtues, were rocks on which my happiness is wrecked. I have ceased to please because I am not thirty-six years old. In the eyes of some men youth is thought an inferiority. There is nothing to imagine on an innocent face. I laugh frankly, and that is wrong; to captivate I ought to play off the melancholy half-smile of the fallen angel, who wants to hide her yellowing teeth. A fresh complexion is monotonous; some men prefer their doll's wax made of rouge and spermaceti and cold cream. I am straightforward; but duplicity is more pleasing.

I am loyally passionate, as an honest woman may be, but I ought to be manœuvring, tricky, hypocritical, and simulate a coldness I have not, — like any provincial actress. I am intoxicated with the happiness of having married one of the most charming men in France; I tell him, naïvely, how distinguished he is, how graceful his movements are, how handsome I think him; but to please him I ought to turn away my head with pretended horror, to love nothing with real love, and tell him his distinction is mere sickliness. I have the misfortune to admire all beautiful things without setting myself up for a wit by caustic and envious criticism of whatever shines from poesy and beauty. I don't seek to make Canalis and Nathan say of *me* in verse and prose that my intellect is superior. I'm only a poor little artless child; I care only for Calyste. Ah! if I had scoured the world like *her*, if I had said as *she* has said, "I love," in every language of Europe, I should be consoled, I should be pitied, I should be adored for serving the regal Macedonian with cosmopolitan love! We are thanked for our tenderness if we set it in relief against our vice. And I, a noble woman, must teach myself impurity and all the tricks of prostitutes! And Calyste is the dupe of such grimaces! Oh, mother! oh, my dear Clotilde! I feel that I have got my death-blow. My pride is only a sham buckler; I am without defence against my misery; I love my husband madly, and yet to bring him back to me I must borrow the wisdom of indifference."

"Silly girl," whispered Clotilde, "let him think you will avenge yourself —"

"I wish to die irreproachable and without the mere

semblance of doing wrong," replied Sabine. "A woman's vengeance should be worthy of her love."

"My child," said the duchess to her daughter, "a mother must of course see life more coolly than you can see it. Love is not the end, but the means, of the Family. Do not imitate that poor Baronne de Macumer. Excessive passion is unfruitful and deadly. And remember, God sends us afflictions with knowledge of our needs. Now that Athénaïs' marriage is arranged, I can give all my thoughts to you. In fact, I have already talked of this delicate crisis in your life with your father and the Duc de Chauvien, and also with d'Ajuda; we shall certainly find means to bring Calyste back to you."

"There is always one resource with the Marquise de Rochefide," remarked Clotilde, smiling, to her sister; "she never keeps her adorers long."

"D'Ajuda, my darling," continued the duchess, "was Monsieur de Rochefide's brother-in-law. If our dear confessor approves of certain little manœuvres to which we must have recourse in order to carry out a plan which I have proposed to your father, I can guarantee to you the recovery of Calyste. My conscience is repugnant to the use of such means, and I must first submit them to the judgment of the Abbé Brossette. We shall not wait, my child, till you are *in extremis* before coming to your relief. Keep a good heart! Your grief to-night is so bitter that my secret escapes me; but it is impossible for me not to give you a little hope."

"Will it make Calyste unhappy?" asked Sabine, looking anxiously at the duchess.

"Oh, heavens! shall I ever be as silly as that!" cried Athénaïs, naïvely.

“ Ah, little girl, you know nothing of the precipices down which our virtue flings us when led by love,” replied Sabine, making a sort of moral revelation, so distraught was she by her woe.

The speech was uttered with such incisive bitterness that the duchess, enlightened by the tone and accent and look of her daughter, felt certain there was some hidden trouble.

“ My dears, it is midnight; come, go to bed,” she said to Clotilde and Athénaïs, whose eyes were shining.

“ In spite of my thirty-five years I appear to be *de trop*,” said Clotilde, laughing. While Athénaïs kissed her mother, Clotilde leaned over Sabine and said in her ear: “ You will tell what it is? I’ll dine with you tomorrow. If my mother’s conscience won’t let her act, I — I myself will get Calyste out of the hands of the infidels.”

“ Well, Sabine,” said the duchess, taking her daughter into her bedroom, “ tell me, what new trouble is there, my child?”

“ Mamma, I am lost !”

“ But how?”

“ I wanted to get the better of that horrible woman — I conquered for a time — I am pregnant again — and Calyste loves her so that I foresee a total abandonment. When she hears of it she will be furious. Ah ! I suffer such tortures that I cannot endure them long. I know when he is going to her, I know it by his joy; and his peevishness tells me as plainly when he leaves her. He no longer troubles himself to conceal his feelings; I have become intolerable to him. She has an influence over him as unhealthy as she is herself in soul and body.

You'll see! she will exact from him, as the price of forgiveness, my public desertion, a rupture like her own; she will take him away from me to Switzerland or Italy. He is beginning now to say it is ridiculous that he knows nothing of Europe. I can guess what those words mean, flung out in advance. If Calyste is not cured of her in three months I don't know what he may become; but as for me, I will kill myself."

"But your soul, my unhappy child? Suicide is a mortal sin."

"Don't you understand? She may give him a child. And if Calyste loved the child of that woman more than mine — Oh! that's the end of my patience and all my resignation."

She fell into a chair. She had given vent to the deepest thought in her heart; she had no longer a hidden grief; and secret sorrow is like that iron rod that sculptors put within the structure of their clay, — it supports, it is a force.

"Come, go home, dear sufferer. In view of such misery the abbé will surely give me absolution for the venial sins which the deceits of the world compel us to commit. Leave me now, my daughter," she said, going to her *prie-Dieu*. "I must pray to our Lord and the Blessed Virgin for you, with special supplication. Good-bye, my dear Sabine; above all things, do not neglect your religious duties if you wish us to succeed."

"And if we do triumph, mother, we shall only save the family. Calyste has killed within me the holy fervor of love, — killed it by sickening me with all things. What a honey-moon was mine, in which I was made to

feel on that first day the bitterness of a retrospective adultery ! ”

The next day, about two in the afternoon, one of the vicars of the faubourg Saint-Germain appointed to a vacant bishopric in 1840 (an office refused by him for the third time), the Abbé Brossette, one of the most distinguished priests in Paris, crossed the courtyard of the hôtel de Grandlieu, with a step which we must needs call the ecclesiastical step, so significant is it of caution, mystery, calmness, gravity, and dignity. He was a thin little man about fifty years of age, with a face as white as that of an old woman, chilled by priestly austerities, and hollowed by all the sufferings which he espoused. Two black eyes, ardent with faith yet softened by an expression more mysterious than mystical, animated that truly apostolical face. He was smiling as he mounted the steps of the portico, so little did he believe in the enormity of the cases about which his penitent sent for him ; but as the hand of the duchess was an open palm for charity, she was worth the time which her innocent confessions stole from the more serious miseries of the parish.

When the vicar was announced the duchess rose, and made a few steps toward him in the salon, — a distinction she granted only to cardinals, bishops, simple priests, duchesses older than herself, and persons of royal blood.

“ My dear abbé,” she said, pointing to a chair and speaking in a low voice, “ I need the authority of your experience before I throw myself into a rather wicked intrigue, although it is one which must result in great good ; and I desire to know from you whether

I shall make hindrances to my own salvation in the course I propose to follow."

"Madame la duchesse," replied the abbé, "do not mix up spiritual things with worldly things; they are usually irreconcilable. In the first place, what is this matter?"

"You know that my daughter Sabine is dying of grief; Monsieur du Guénic has left her for Madame de Rochefide."

"It is very dreadful, very serious; but you know what our dear Saint François de Sales says on that subject. Remember too how Madame Guyon complained of the lack of mysticism in the proofs of conjugal love; she would have been very willing to see her husband with a Madame de Rochefide."

"Sabine is only too gentle; she is almost too completely a Christian wife; but she has not the slightest taste for mysticism."

"Poor young woman!" said the abbé, maliciously. "What method will you take to remedy the evil?"

"I have committed the sin, my dear director, of thinking how to launch upon Madame de Rochefide a little man, very self-willed and full of the worst qualities, who will certainly induce her to dismiss my son-in-law."

"My daughter," replied the abbé, stroking his chin, "we are not now in the confessional; I am not obliged to make myself your judge. From the world's point of view, I admit that the result would be decisive —"

"The means seem to me odious," she said.

"Why? No doubt the duty of a Christian woman is to withdraw a sinning woman from an evil path,

rather than push her along it; but when a woman has advanced upon that path as far as Madame de Rochefide, it is not the hand of man, but that of God, which recalls such a sinner; she needs a thunderbolt."

"Father," replied the duchess, "I thank you for your indulgence; but the thought has occurred to me that my son-in-law is brave and a Breton. He was heroic at the time of the rash affair of that poor MADAME. Now, if the young fellow who undertook to make Madame de Rochefide love him were to quarrel with Calyste, and a duel should ensue —"

"You have thought wisely, Madame la duchesse; and it only proves that in crooked paths you will always find rocks of stumbling."

"I have discovered a means, my dear abbé, to do a great good; to withdraw Madame de Rochefide from the fatal path in which she now is; to restore Calyste to his wife, and possibly to save from hell a poor distracted creature."

"In that case, why consult me?" asked the vicar, smiling.

"Ah!" replied the duchess, "because I must permit myself some rather nasty actions —"

"You don't mean to rob anybody?"

"On the contrary, I shall apparently have to spend a good deal of money."

"You will not calumniate, or —"

"Oh! oh!"

"— injure your neighbor?"

"I don't know about that."

"Come, tell me your plan," said the abbé, now becoming curious.

“Suppose, instead of driving out one nail by another, — this is what I thought at my *prie-Dieu* after imploring the Blessed Virgin to enlighten me, — I were to free Calyste by persuading Monsieur de Rochefide to take back his wife? Instead of lending a hand to evil for the sake of doing good to my daughter, I should do one great good by another almost as great — ”

The vicar looked at the Portuguese lady and was pensive.

“That is evidently an idea that came to you from afar,” he said, “so far that — ”

“I have thanked the Virgin for it,” replied the good and humble duchess; “and I have made a vow — not counting a novena — to give twelve hundred francs to some poor family if I succeed. But when I communicated my plan to Monsieur de Grandlieu he began to laugh, and said: ‘Upon my honor, at your time of life I think you women have a devil of your own.’”

“Monsieur le duc made as a husband the same reply I was about to make when you interrupted me,” said the abbé, who could not restrain a smile.

“Ah! Father, if you approve of the idea, will you also approve of the means of execution? It is necessary to do to a certain Madame Schontz (a Béatrix of the quartier Saint-Georges) what I proposed to do to Madame de Rochefide.”

“I am certain that you will not do any real wrong,” said the vicar, cleverly, not wishing to hear any more, having found the result so desirable. “You can consult me later if you find your conscience muttering,” he added. “But why, instead of giving that person in

the rue Saint-Georges a fresh occasion for scandal, don't you give her a husband?"

"Ah! my dear director, now you have rectified the only bad thing I had in my plan. You are worthy of being an archbishop, and I hope I shall not die till I have had the opportunity of calling you Your Eminence."

"I see only one difficulty in all this," said the abbé.

"What is that?"

"Suppose Madame de Rochefide chooses to keep your son-in-law after she goes back to her husband?"

"That's my affair," replied the duchess; "when one does n't often intrigue, one does so —"

"Badly, very badly," said the abbé. "Habit is necessary for everything. Try to employ some of those scamps who live by intrigue, and don't show your own hand."

"Ah! monsieur l'abbé, if I make use of the means of hell, will Heaven help me?"

"You are not at confession," repeated the abbé. "Save your child."

The worthy duchess, delighted with her vicar, accompanied him to the door of the salon.

XXII.

THE NORMAL HISTORY OF AN UPPER-CLASS GRISETTE.

A STORM was gathering, as we see, over Monsieur de Rochefide, who enjoyed at that moment the greatest amount of happiness that a Parisian can desire in being to Madame Schontz as much a husband as he had been to Béatrix. It seemed therefore, as the duke had very sensibly said to his wife, almost an impossibility to upset so agreeable and satisfactory an existence. This opinion will oblige us to give certain details on the life led by Monsieur de Rochefide after his wife had placed him in the position of a *deserted husband*. The reader will then be enabled to understand the enormous difference which our laws and our morals put between the two sexes in the same situation. That which turns to misery for the woman turns to happiness for the man. This contrast may inspire more than one young woman with the determination to remain in her own home, and to struggle there, like Sabine du Guénic, by practising (as she may select) the most aggressive or the most inoffensive virtues.

Some days after Béatrix abandoned him, Arthur de Rochefide, now an only child in consequence of the death of his sister, the first wife of the Marquis d'Ajudapinto, who left no children, found himself sole master of

the hôtel de Rochefide, rue d'Anjou Saint-Honoré, and of two hundred thousand francs a year left to him by his father. This rich inheritance, added to the fortune which Arthur possessed when he married, brought his income, including that from the fortune of his wife, to a thousand francs a day. To a gentleman endowed with a nature such as Mademoiselle des Touches had described it in a few words to Calyste, such wealth was happiness enough. While his wife continued in her home and fulfilled the duties of maternity, Rochefide enjoyed this immense fortune; but he did not spend it any more than he expended the faculties of his mind. His good, stout vanity, gratified by the figure he presented as a handsome man (to which he owed a few successes that authorized him to despise women), allowed itself free scope in the matter of brains. Gifted with the sort of mind which we must call a reflector, he appropriated the sallies of others, the wit of the stage and the *petits journaux*, by his method of repeating them, and applied them as formulas of criticism. His military joviality (he had served in the Royal Guard) seasoned conversation with so much point that women without any intellects proclaimed him witty, and the rest did not dare to contradict them.

This system Arthur pursued in all things; he owed to nature the convenient genius of imitation without mimicry; he imitated seriously. Thus, without any taste of his own, he knew how to be the first to adopt and the first to abandon a new fashion. Accused of nothing worse than spending too much time at his toilet and of wearing a corset, he presented the type of those persons who displease no one by adopting incessantly the

ideas and the follies of everybody, and who, astride of circumstance, never grow old.

As a husband, he was pitied; people thought Béatrix inexcusable for deserting the best fellow on earth, and social jeers only touched the woman. A member of all clubs, subscriber to all the absurdities generated by patriotism or party spirit ill-understood (a compliance which put him in the front rank *à propos* of all such matters), this loyal, brave, and very silly nobleman, whom unfortunately so many rich men resemble, would naturally desire to distinguish himself by adopting some fashionable mania. Consequently, he glorified his name principally in being the sultan of a four-footed harem, governed by an old English groom, which cost him monthly from four to five thousand francs. His specialty was *running horses*; he protected the equine race and supported a magazine devoted to hippic questions; but, for all that, he knew very little of the animals, and from shoes to bridles he depended wholly on his groom,—all of which will sufficiently explain to you that this semi-bachelor had nothing actually of his own, neither mind, taste, position, or absurdity; even his fortune came from his fathers. After having tasted the displeasures of marriage, he was so content to find himself once more a bachelor that he said among his friends, “I was born with a caul” (that is, to good luck).

Pleased above all things to be able to live without the costs of making an appearance, to which husbands are constrained, his house, in which since the death of his father nothing had been changed, resembled those of masters who are travelling; he lived there little, never

dined, and seldom slept there. Here follows the reason for such indifference.

After various amorous adventures, bored by women of fashion of the kind who are truly bores, and who plant too many thorny hedges around happiness, he had married after a fashion, as we shall see, a certain Madame Schontz, celebrated in the world of Fanny Beaupré, Susanne du Val-Noble, Florine, Mariette, Jenny Cadine, etc. This world, — of which one of our artists wittily remarked at the frantic moment of an opera *galop*, “When one thinks that all *that* is lodged and clothed and lives well, what a fine idea it gives us of mankind!” — this world has already irrupted elsewhere into this history of French manners and customs of the nineteenth century; but to paint it with fidelity, the historian should proportion the number of such personages to the diverse endings of their strange careers, which terminate either in poverty under its most hideous aspect, or by premature death often self-inflicted, or by lucky marriages, occasionally by opulence.

Madame Schontz, known at first under the name of La Petite-Aurélié, to distinguish her from one of her rivals far less clever than herself, belongs to the highest class of those women whose social utility cannot be questioned by the prefect of the Seine, nor by those who are interested in the welfare of the city of Paris. Certainly the Rat, accused of demolishing fortunes which frequently never existed, might better be compared to a beaver. Without the Aspasiæ of the Notre-Dame de Lorette quarter, far fewer houses would be built in Paris. Pioncers in fresh stucco, they have gone,

towed by speculation, along the heights of Montmartre, pitching their tents in those solitudes of carved free-stone, the like of which adorns the European streets of Amsterdam, Milan, Stockholm, London, and Moscow, architectural steppes where the wind rustles innumerable papers on which a void is divulged by the words, *Apartments to let.*

The situation of these dames is determined by that which they take in the apocryphal regions. If the house is near the line traced by the rue de Provence, the woman has an income, her budget prospers; but if she approaches the farther line of the Boulevard Exterieur or rises toward the horrid town of Batignolles, she is without resources. When Monsieur de Rochefide first encountered Madame Schontz, she lived on the third floor of the only house that remained in the rue de Berlin; thus she was camping on the border-land between misery and its reverse. This person was not really named, as you may suppose, either Schontz or Aurélie. She concealed the name of her father, an old soldier of the Empire, that perennial colonel who appears at the dawn of all these feminine existences either as father or seducer. Madame Schontz had received the gratuitous education of Saint-Denis, where young girls are admirably brought up, but where, unfortunately, neither husbands nor openings in life are offered to them when they leave the school,—an admirable creation of the Emperor, which now lacks but one thing, the Emperor himself!

“I shall be there, to provide for the daughters of my faithful legions,” he replied to a remark of one of his ministers, who foresaw the future.

Napoleon had also said, " I shall be there ! " for the members of the Institute ; to whom they had better give no salary than send them eighty francs each month, a wage that is less than that of certain clerks !

Aurélié was really the daughter of the intrepid Colonel Schiltz, a leader of those bold Alsacian guerillas who came near saving the Emperor in the campaign of France. He died at Metz,—robbed, pillaged, ruined. In 1814 Napoleon put the little Joséphine Schiltz, then about nine years old, at Saint-Denis. Having lost both father and mother and being without a home and without resources, the poor child was not dismissed from the institution on the second return of the Bourbons. She was under-mistress of the school till 1827, but then her patience gave way ; her beauty seduced her. When she reached her majority Joséphine Schiltz, the Empress's goddaughter, was on the verge of the adventurous life of a courtesan, persuaded to that doubtful future by the fatal example of some of her comrades like herself without resources, who congratulated themselves on their decision. She substituted *on* for *il* in her father's name and placed herself under the patronage of Sainte-Aurélié.

Lively, witty, and well-educated, she committed more faults than her duller companions, whose misdemeanors had invariably self-interest for their base. After knowing various writers, poor but dishonest, clever but deeply in debt ; after trying certain rich men as calculating as they were foolish ; and after sacrificing solid interests to one true love,— thus going through all the schools in which experience is taught, — on a certain day of extreme misery, when, at Valentino's (the first

stage to Musard) she danced in a gown, hat, and mantle that were all borrowed, she attracted the attention of Arthur de Rochefide, who had come there to see the famous *galop*. Her cleverness instantly captivated the man who at that time knew not what passion to devote himself to. So that two years after his desertion by Béatrix, the memory of whom often humiliated him, the marquis was not blamed by any one for marrying, so to speak, in the thirteenth arrondissement, a substitute for his wife.

Let us sketch the four periods of this happiness. It is necessary to show that the theory of marriage in the thirteenth arrondissement affects in like manner all who come within its rule.¹ Marquis in the forties, sexagenary retired shopkeeper, quadruple millionaire or moderate-income man, great seigneur or bourgeois, the strategy of passion (except for the differences inherent in social zones) never varies. The heart and the money-box are always in the same exact and clearly defined relation. Thus informed, you will be able to estimate the difficulties the duchess was certain to encounter in her charitable enterprise.

Who knows the power in France of witty sayings upon ordinary minds, or what harm the clever men who invent them have done? For instance, no bookkeeper could add up the figures of the sums remaining unproductive and lost in the depths of generous hearts and strong-boxes by that ignoble phrase, "*tirer une carotte!*"

The saying has become so popular that it must be

¹ Before 1859 there was no 13th arrondissement in Paris, hence the saying.—T.R.

allowed to soil this page. Besides, if we penetrate within the 13th arrondissement, we are forced to accept its picturesque patois. *Tirer une carotte* has a dozen allied meanings, but it suffices to give it here as: *To dupe*. Monsieur de Rochefide, like all little minds, was terribly afraid of being *carotté*. The noun has become a verb. From the very start of his passion for Madame Schontz, Arthur was on his guard, and he was, therefore, very *rat*, to use another word of the same vocabulary. The word *rat*, when applied to a young girl, means the guest or the one entertained, but applied to a man it signifies the giver of the feast who is niggardly.

Madame Schontz had too much sense and she knew men too well not to conceive great hopes from such a beginning. Monsieur de Rochefide allowed her five hundred francs a month, furnished for her, rather shabbily; an apartment costing twelve hundred francs a year on a second floor in the rue Coquenard, and set himself to study Aurélie's character, while she, perceiving his object, gave him a character to study. Consequently, Rochefide became happy in meeting with a woman of noble nature. But he saw nothing surprising in that; her mother was a Barnheim of Baden, a well-bred woman. Besides, Aurélie was so well brought up herself! Speaking English, German, and Italian, she possessed a thorough knowledge of foreign literatures. She could hold her own against all second-class pianists. And, remark this! she behaved about her talents like a well-bred woman; she never mentioned them. She picked up a brush in a painter's studio, used it half jestingly, and produced a head which

caused general astonishment. For mere amusement during the time she pined as under-mistress at Saint-Denis, she had made some advance in the domain of the sciences, but her subsequent life had covered these good seeds with a coating of salt, and she now gave Arthur the credit of the sprouting of the precious germs, re-cultivated for him.

Thus Aurélie began by showing a disinterestedness equal to her other charms, which allowed this weak corvette to attach its grapnels securely to the larger vessel. Nevertheless, about the end of the first year, she made ignoble noises in the antechamber with her clogs, coming in about the time when the marquis was awaiting her, and hiding, as best she could, the draggled tail of an outrageously muddy gown. In short, she had by this time so perfectly persuaded her *gros papa* that all her ambition, after so many ups and downs, was to obtain honorably a comfortable little bourgeois existence, that, about ten months after their first meeting, the second phase of happiness declared itself.

Madame Schontz then obtained a fine apartment in the rue Neuve-Saint-Georges. Arthur, who could no longer conceal the amount of his fortune, gave her splendid furniture, a complete service of plate, twelve hundred francs a month, a low carriage with one horse, — this, however, was hired; but he granted a tiger very graciously. Madame Schontz was not the least grateful for this munificence; she knew the motive of her Arthur's conduct, and recognized the calculations of the male *rat*. Sick of living at a restaurant, where the fare is usually execrable, and where the least little *gourmet* dinner

costs sixty francs for one, and two hundred francs if you invite three friends, Rochefide offered Madame Schontz forty francs a day for his dinner and that of a friend, everything included. Aurélie accepted.

Thus having made him take up all her moral letters of credit, drawn one by one on Monsieur de Rochefide's comfort, she was listened to with favor when she asked for five hundred francs more a month for her dress, in order not to shame her *gros papa*, whose friends all belonged to the Jockey-Club.

"It would be a pretty thing," she said, "if Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, d'Esgrignon, La Roche-Hugon, Ronquerolles, Laginski, Lenoncourt, found you with a sort of Madame Everard. Besides, have confidence in me, papa, and you'll be the gainer."

In fact, Aurélie contrived to display new virtues in this second phase. She laid out for herself a house-keeping rôle for which she claimed much credit. She made, so she said, both ends meet at the close of the month on two thousand five hundred francs without a debt, — a thing unheard of in the faubourg Saint-Germain of the 13th arrondissement, — and she served dinners infinitely superior to those of Nucingen, at which exquisite wines were drunk at twelve francs a bottle. Rochefide, amazed, and delighted to be able to invite his friends to the house with economy, declared, as he caught her round the waist, —

"She's a treasure!"

Soon after he hired one-third of a box at the Opera for her; next he took her to first representations. Then he began to consult his Aurélie, and recognized the excellence of her advice. She let him take the

clever sayings she said about most things for his own, and, these being unknown to others, raised his reputation as an amusing man. He now acquired the certainty of being loved truly, and for himself alone. Aurélie refused to make the happiness of a Russian prince who offered her five thousand francs a month.

“ You are a lucky man, my dear marquis,” cried old Prince Galathionne as he finished his game of whist at the club. “ Yesterday, after you left us alone, I tried to get Madame Schontz away from you, but she said : ‘ Prince, you are not handsomer, but you are a great deal older than Rochefide ; you would beat me, but he is like a father to me ; can you give me one-tenth of a reason why I should change ? I’ve never had the grand passion for Arthur that I once had for little fools in varnished boots and whose debts I paid ; but I love him as a wife loves her husband when she is an honest woman.’ And thereupon she showed me the door.”

This speech, which did not seem exaggerated, had the effect of greatly increasing the state of neglect and degradation which reigned in the hôtel de Rochefide. Arthur now transported his whole existence and his pleasures to Madame Schontz, and found himself well off ; for at the end of three years he had four hundred thousand francs to invest.

The third phase now began. Madame Schontz became the tenderest of mothers to Arthur’s son ; she fetched him from school and took him back herself ; she overwhelmed with presents and dainties and pocket-money the child who called her his “ little mamma,” and who adored her. She took part in the manage

ment of Arthur's property; she made him buy into the Funds when low, just before the famous treaty of London which overturned the ministry of March 1st. Arthur gained two hundred thousand francs by that transaction and Aurélie did not ask for a penny of it. Like the gentleman that he was, Rochefide invested his six hundred thousand francs in stock of the Bank of France and put half of that sum in the name of Joséphine Schiltz. A little house was now hired in the rue de La Bruyère and given to Grindot, that great decorative architect, with orders to make it a perfect bonbon-box.

Henceforth, Rochefide no longer managed his affairs. Madame Schontz received the revenues and paid the bills. Become, as it were, practically his wife, his woman of business, she justified the position by making her *gros papa* more comfortable than ever; she had learned all his fancies, and gratified them as Madame de Pompadour gratified those of Louis XV. In short, Madame Schontz reigned an absolute mistress. She then began to patronize a few young men, artists, men of letters, new-fledged to fame, who rejected both ancients and moderns, and strove to make themselves a great reputation by accomplishing little or nothing.

The conduct of Madame Schontz, a triumph of tactics, ought to reveal to you her superiority. In the first place, these ten or a dozen young fellows amused Arthur; they supplied him with witty sayings and clever opinions on all sorts of topics, and did not put in doubt the fidelity of the mistress; moreover, they proclaimed her a woman who was eminently intelli-

gent. These living advertisements, these perambulating articles, soon set up Madame Schontz as the most agreeable woman to be found in the borderland which separates the thirteenth arrondissement from the twelve others. Her rivals — Suzanne Gaillard, who, in 1838, had won the advantage over her of becoming a wife married in legitimate marriage, Fanny Beaupré, Mariette, Antonia — spread calumnies that were more than droll about the beauty of those young men and the complacent good-nature with which Monsieur de Rochefide welcomed them. Madame Schontz, who could distance, as she said, by three *blagues* the wit of those ladies, said to them one night at a supper given by Nathan to Florine, after recounting her fortune and her success, “Do as much yourselves!” — a speech which remained in their memory.

It was during this period that Madame Schontz made Arthur sell his race-horses, through a series of considerations which she no doubt derived from the critical mind of Claude Vignon, one of her *habitués*.

“I can conceive,” she said one night, after lashing the horses for some time with her lively wit, “that princes and rich men should set their hearts on horse-flesh, but only for the good of the country, not for the paltry satisfactions of a betting man. If you had a stud farm on your property and could raise a thousand or twelve hundred horses, and if all the horses of France and of Navarre could enter into one great solemn competition, it would be fine; but you buy animals as the managers of theatres trade in artists; you degrade an institution to a gambling game; you make a Bourse of legs, as you make a Bourse of

stocks. It is unworthy. Don't you spend sixty thousand francs sometimes merely to read in the newspapers : ' Lélia, belonging to Monsieur de Rochefide beat by a length Fleur-de-Genêt the property of Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré ' ? You had much better give that money to poets, who would carry you in prose and verse to immortality, like the late Montyon."

By dint of being prodded, the marquis was brought to see the hollowness of the turf; he realized that economy of sixty thousand francs; and the next year Madame Schontz remarked to him, —

" I don't cost you anything now, Arthur."

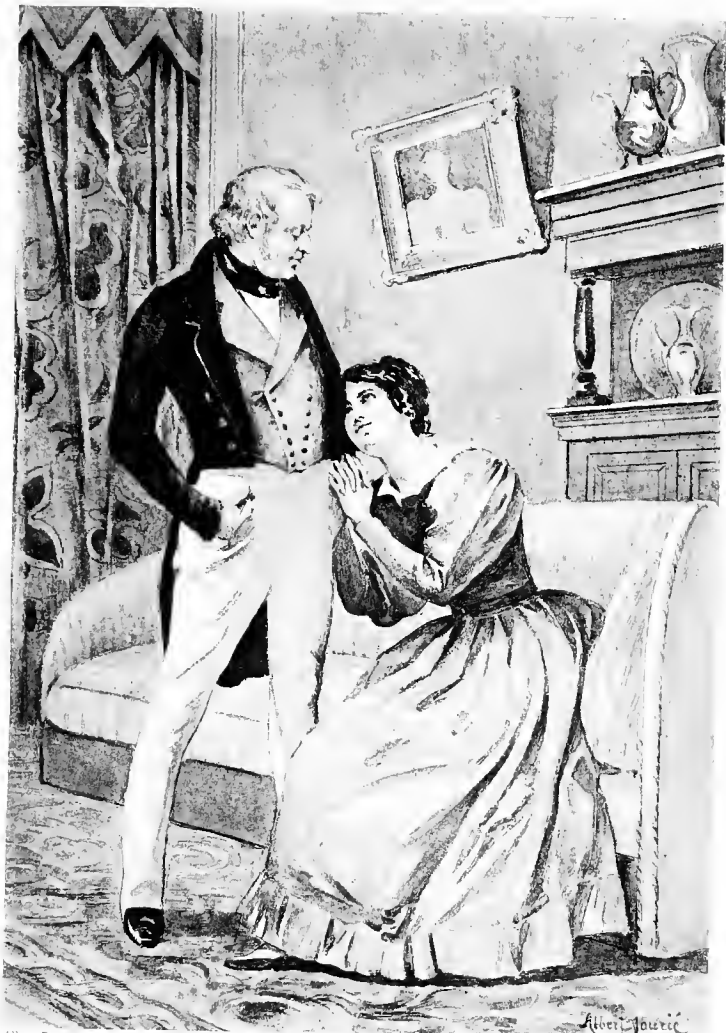
Many rich men envied the marquis and endeavored to entice Madame Schontz away from him, but like the Russian prince they wasted their old age.

" Listen to me," she said to Finot, now become immensely rich. " I am certain that Rochefide would forgive me a little passion if I fell in love with any one, but one does n't leave a marquis with a kind heart like that for a *parvenu* like you. You could n't keep me in the position in which Arthur has placed me; he has made me half a wife and a lady, and that's more than you could do even if you married me."

This was the last nail which clinched the fetters of that happy galley-slave, for the speech of course reached the ears for which it was intended.

The fourth phase had begun, that of *habît*, the final victory in these plans of campaign, which make the women of this class say of a man, " I hold him!" Rochefide, who had just bought the little hôtel in the name of Mademoiselle Joséphine Schiltz (a trifle of eighty thousand francs), had reached, at the moment

“ ‘I don't cost you anything now, Arthur.’ ”



Albert Fourie

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Albert Fourie

Procedt Coupl

the Duchesse de Grandlieu was forming plans about him, the stage of deriving vanity from his mistress (whom he now called Ninon II.), by vaunting her scrupulous honesty, her excellent manners, her education, and her wit. He had merged his own defects, merits, tastes, and pleasures in Madame Schontz, and he found himself at this period of his life, either from lassitude, indifference, or philosophy, a man unable to change, who clings to wife or mistress.

We may understand the position won in five years by Madame Schontz from the fact that presentation at her house had to be proposed some time before it was granted. She refused to receive dull rich people and smirched people; and only departed from this rule in favor of certain great names of the aristocracy.

“They,” she said, “have a right to be stupid because they are well-bred.”

She possessed ostensibly the three hundred thousand francs which Rochefide had given her, and which a certain good fellow, a broker named Gobenheim (the only man of that class admitted to her house) invested and reinvested for her. But she manipulated for herself secretly a little fortune of two hundred thousand francs, the result of her savings for the last three years and of the constant movement of the three hundred thousand francs, — for she never admitted the possession of more than that known sum.

“The more you make, the less you get rich,” said Gobenheim to her one day.

“Water is so dear,” she answered.

This secret hoard was increased by jewels and diamonds, which Aurélie wore a month and then sold.

When any one called her rich, Madame Schontz replied that at the rate of interest in the Funds three hundred thousand francs produced only twelve thousand, and she had spent as much as that in the hardest days of her life.

XXIII.

ONE OF THE DISEASES OF THE AGE.

SUCH conduct implied a plan, and Madame Schontz had, as you may well believe, a plan. Jealous for the last two years of Madame du Bruel, she was consumed with the ambition to be married by church and mayor. All social positions have their forbidden fruit, some little thing magnified by desire until it has become the weightiest thing in life. This ambition of course involved a second Arthur; but no espial on the part of those about her had as yet discovered Rochefide's rival. Bixiou fancied he saw the favored one in Léon de Lora; the painter saw him in Bixiou, who had passed his fortieth year and ought to be making himself a fate of some kind. Suspicions were also turned on Victor de Vernisset, a poet of the school of Canalis, whose passion for Madame Schontz was desperate; but the poet accused Stidmann, a young sculptor, of being his fortunate rival. This artist, a charming lad, worked for jewellers, for manufacturers in bronze and silver-smiths; he longed to be another Benvenuto Cellini. Claude Vignon, the young Comte de la Palférine, Gobenheim, Vermanton a cynical philosopher, all frequenters of this amusing salon, were severally suspected,

and proved innocent. No one had fathomed Madame Schontz, certainly not Rochefide, who thought she had a penchant for the young and witty La Palférine; she was virtuous from self-interest and was wholly bent on making a good marriage.

Only one man of equivocal reputation was ever seen in Madame Schontz's salon, namely Couture, who had more than once made his brother-speculators howl; but Couture had been one of Madame Schontz's earliest friends, and she alone remained faithful to him. The false alarm of 1840 swept away the last vestige of this stock-gambler's credit; Aurélie, seeing his run of ill-luck, made Rochefide play, as we have seen, in the other direction. Thankful to find a place for himself at Aurélie's table, Couture, to whom Finot, the cleverest or, if you choose, the luckiest of all parvenus, occasionally gave a note of a thousand francs, was alone wise and calculating enough to offer his hand and name to Madame Schontz, who studied him to see if the bold speculator had sufficient power to make his way in politics and enough gratitude not to desert his wife. Couture, a man about forty-three years of age, half worn-out, did not redeem the unpleasant sonority of his name by birth; he said little of the authors of his days.

Madame Schontz was bemoaning to herself the rarity of eligible men, when Couture presented to her a provincial, supplied with the two handles by which women take hold of such pitchers when they wish to keep them. To sketch this person will be to paint a portion of the youth of the day.' The digression is history.

In 1838, Fabien du Ronceret, son of a chief-justice of the Royal court at Caen (who had lately died), left his native town of Alençon, resigning his judgeship (a position in which his father had compelled him, he said, to waste his time), and came to Paris, with the intention of making a noise there, — a Norman idea, difficult to realize, for he could scarcely scrape together eight thousand francs a year; his mother being still alive and possessing a life-interest in a valuable estate in Alençon. This young man had already, during previous visits to Paris, tried his rope, like an acrobat, and had recognized the great vice of the social replastering of 1830. He meant to turn it to his own profit, following the example of the longest heads of the bourgeoisie. This requires a rapid glance on one of the effects of the new order of things.

Modern equality, unduly developed in our day, has necessarily developed in private life, on a line parallel with political life, the three great divisions of the social *I*; namely, pride, conceit, and vanity. Fools wish to pass for wits; wits want to be thought men of talent; men of talent wish to be treated as men of genius; as for men of genius, they are more reasonable; they consent to be only demigods. This tendency of the public mind of these days, which, in the Chamber, makes the manufacturer jealous of the statesman, and the administrator jealous of the writer, leads fools to disparage wits, wits to disparage men of talent, men of talent to disparage those who outstrip them by an inch or two, and the demigods to threaten institutions, the throne, or whatever does not adore them uncondition-

ally. So soon as a nation has, in a very unstatesman-like spirit, pulled down all recognized social superiorities, she opens the sluice through which rushes a torrent of secondary ambitions, the meanest of which resolves to lead. She had, so democrats declare, an evil in her aristocracy; but a defined and circumscribed evil; she exchanges it for a dozen armed and contending aristocracies—the worst of all situations. By proclaiming the equality of all, she has pronulgated a declaration of the rights of Envy. We inherit to-day the saturnalias of the Revolution transferred to the domain, apparently peaceful, of the mind, of industry, of politics; it now seems that reputations won by toil, by services rendered, by talent, are privileges granted at the expense of the masses. Agrarian law will soon spread to the field of glory. Never, in any age, have men demanded the affixing of their names on the nation's posters for reasons more puerile. Distinction is sought at any price, by ridicule, by an affectation of interest in the cause of Poland, in penitentiaries, in the future of liberated galley-slaves, in all the little scoundrels above and below twelve years, and in every other social misery. These diverse manias create fictitious dignities, presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries of societies, the number of which is greater than that of the social questions they seek to solve. Society on its great scale has been demolished to make a million of little ones in the image of the defunct. These parasitic organizations reveal decomposition; are they not the swarming of maggots in the dead body? All these societies are the daughters of one mother, Vanity. It is not thus that Catholic charity or true beneficence proceeds; *they*

study evils in wounds and cure them; they don't perorate in public meetings upon deadly ills for the pleasure of perorating.

Fabien du Ronceret, without being a superior man, had divined, by the exercise of that greedy common-sense peculiar to a Norman, the gain he could derive from this public vice. Every epoch has its character which clever men make use of. Fabien's mind, though not clever, was wholly bent on making himself talked about.

"My dear fellow, a man must make himself talked about, if he wants to be anything," he said, on parting from the king of Alençon, a certain du Bousquier, a friend of his father. "In six months I shall be better known than you are!"

It was thus that Fabien interpreted the spirit of his age; he did not rule it, he obeyed it. He made his début in Bohemia, a region in the topography of Paris where he was known as "The Heir" by reason of certain premeditated prodigalities. Du Ronceret had profited by Couture's follies for the pretty Madame Cadine, for whom, during his ephemeral opulence, he had arranged a delightful ground-floor apartment with a garden in the rue Blanche. The Norman, who wanted his luxury ready-made, bought Couture's furniture and all the improvements he was forced to leave behind him, — a kiosk in the garden, where he smoked, a gallery in rustic wood, with India mattings and adorned with potteries, through which to reach the kiosk if it rained. When the Heir was complimented on his apartment, he called it his *den*. The provincial took care not to say that Grindot, the architect, had be-

stowed his best capacity upon it, as did Stidmann on the carvings, and Léon de Lora on the paintings, for Fabien's crowning defect was the vanity which condescends to lie for the sake of magnifying the individual self.

The Heir completed these magnificences by a greenhouse which he built along a wall with a southern exposure, — not that he loved flowers, but he meant to attack through horticulture the public notice he wanted to excite. At the present moment he had all but attained his end. Elected vice-president of some sort of floral society presided over by the Duc de Vissembourg, brother of the Prince de Chiavari, youngest son of the late Maréchal Vernon, he adorned his coat with the ribbon of the Legion of honor on the occasion of an exhibition of products, the opening speech at which, delivered by him, and bought of Lousteau for five hundred francs, was boldly pronounced to be his own brew. He also made himself talked about by a flower, given to him by old Blondet of Alençon, father of Émile Blondet, which he presented to the horticultural world as the product of his own greenhouse.

But this success was nothing. The Heir, who wished to be accepted as a wit, had formed a plan of consorting with clever celebrities and so reflecting their fame, — a plan somewhat hard to execute on a basis of an exchequer limited to eight thousand francs a year. With this end in view, Fabien du Ronceret had addressed himself again and again, without success, to Bixiou, Stidmann, and Léon de Lora, asking them to present him to Madame Schontz, and allow him to take part in that menagerie of lions of all kinds. Failing in those

directions he applied to Couture, for whose dinners he had so often paid that the late speculator felt obliged to prove categorically to Madame Schontz that she ought to acquire such an original, if it was only to make him one of those elegant footmen without wages whom the mistresses of households employ to do errands, when servants are lacking.

In the course of three evenings Madame Schontz read Fabien like a book and said to herself, —

“If Couture does not suit me, I am certain of saddling that one. My future can go on two legs now.”

This queer fellow whom everybody laughed at was really the chosen one, — chosen, however, with an intention which made such preference insulting. The choice escaped all public suspicion by its very improbability. Madame Schontz intoxicated Fabien with smiles given secretly, with little scenes played on the threshold when she bade him good-night, if Monsieur de Rochefide remained behind. She often made Fabien a third with Arthur in her opera-box and at first representations; this she excused by saying he had done her such or such a service and she did not know how else to repay him. Men have a natural conceit as common to them as to women, — that of being loved exclusively. Now of all flattering passions there is none more prized than that of a Madame Schontz, for the man she makes the object of a love she calls “from the heart,” in distinction from another sort of love. A woman like Madame Schontz, who plays the great lady, and whose intrinsic value is real, was sure to be an object of pride to Fabien, who fell in love with her to

the point of never presenting himself before her eyes except in full dress, varnished boots, lemon-kid gloves, embroidered shirt and frill, waistcoat more or less variegated, — in short, with all the external symptoms of profound worship.

A month before the conference of the duchess and her confessor, Madame Schontz had confided the secret of her birth and her real name to Fabien, who did not in the least understand the motive of the confidence. A fortnight later, Madame Schontz, surprised at this want of intelligence, suddenly exclaimed to herself: —

“Heavens! how stupid I am! he expects me to love him for himself.”

Accordingly the next day she took the Heir in her *calèche* to the Bois, for she now had two little carriages, drawn by two horses. In the course of this public *tête-à-tête* she opened the question of her future, and declared that she wished to marry.

“I have seven hundred thousand francs,” she said, “and I admit to you that if I could find a man full of ambition, who knew how to understand my character, I would change my position; for do you know what is the dream of my life? To become a true bourgeoisie, enter an honorable family, and make my husband and children truly happy.”

The Norman would fain be “distinguished” by Madame Schontz, but as for marrying her, that folly seemed debatable to a bachelor of thirty-eight whom the revolution of July had made a judge. Seeing his hesitation, Madame Schontz made the Heir the butt of her wit, her jests, and her disdain, and turned to Couture. Within a week, the latter, whom she put upon the scent

of her fortune, had offered his hand, and heart, and future, — three things of about the same value.

The manœuvres of Madame Schontz had reached this stage of proceeding, when Madame de Grandlieu began her inquiries into the life and habits of the Béatrix of the Place Saint-Georges.

XXIV.

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL RELATIONS AND POSITION.

IN accordance with the advice of the Abbé Brossette the Duchesse de Grandlieu asked the Marquis d'Ajuda to bring her that king of political cut-throats, the celebrated Comte Maxime de Trailles, archduke of Bohemia, the youngest of young men, although he was now fully fifty years of age. Monsieur d'Ajuda arranged to dine with Maxime at the club in the rue de Beaune, and proposed to him after dinner to go and play dummy whist with the Duc de Grandlieu, who had an attack of gout and was all alone.

Though the son-in-law of the duke and the cousin of the duchess had every right to present him in a salon where he had never yet set foot, Maxime de Trailles did not deceive himself as to the meaning of an invitation thus given. He felt certain that the duke or the duchess had some need of him. Club life where men play cards with other men whom they do not receive in their own houses is by no means one of the most trifling signs of the present age.

The Duc de Grandlieu did Maxime the honor of appearing to suffer from his gout. After several games of whist he went to bed, leaving his wife *tête à tête* with Maxime and d'Ajuda. The duchess, seconded by the

marquis, communicated her project to Monsieur de Trailles, and asked his assistance, while ostensibly asking only for his advice. Maxime listened to the end without committing himself, and waited till the duchess should ask point-blank for his co-operation before replying.

“Madame, I fully understand you,” he then said, casting on her and on the marquis one of those shrewd, penetrating, astute, comprehensive glances by which such great scamps compromise their interlocutors. “D’Ajuda will tell you that if any one in Paris can conduct that difficult negotiation, it is I,—of course without mixing you up in it; without its being even known that I have come here this evening. Only, before anything is done, we must settle preliminaries. How much are you willing to sacrifice?”

“All that is necessary.”

“Very well, then, Madame la duchesse. As the price of my efforts you must do me the honor to receive in your house and seriously protect Madame la Comtesse de Trailles.”

“What! are you married?” cried d’Ajuda.

“I shall be married within a fortnight to the heiress of a rich but extremely bourgeois family, — a sacrifice to opinion! I imbibe the very spirit of my government, and start upon a new career. Consequently, Madame la duchesse will understand how important it is to me to have my wife adopted by her and by her family. I am certain of being made deputy by the resignation of my father-in-law, and I am promised a diplomatic post in keeping with my new fortune. I do not see why my wife should not be as well received as Madame de

Portenduère in that society of young women which includes Mesdames de La Bastie, Georges de Maufrigneuse, de L'Estorade, du Guénic, d'Ajuda, de Restaud, de Rastignac, de Vandenesse. My wife is pretty, and I will undertake to *un-cotton-night-cap* her. Will this suit you, Madame la duchesse? You are religious, and if you say yes, your promise, which I know to be sacred, will greatly aid in my change of life. It will be one more good action to your account. Alas! I have long been the king of *mauvais sujets*, and I want to make an end of it. After all, we bear, azure, a wivern or, darting fire, onglé gules, and scaled vert, a chief ermine, from the time of François I., who thought proper to enoble the valet of Louis XI., and we have been counts since Catherine de' Medici."

"I will receive and protect your wife," said the duchess, solemnly, "and my family shall not turn its back upon her; I give you my word."

"Ah! Madame la duchesse," cried Maxime, visibly touched, "if Monsieur le duc would also deign to treat me with some kindness, I promise you to make your plan succeed without its costing you very much. But," he continued after a pause, "you must take upon yourself to follow my instructions. This is the last intrigue of my bachelor life; it must be all the better managed because it concerns a good action," he added, smiling.

"Follow your instructions!" said the duchess. "Then I must appear in all this."

"Ah! madame, I will not compromise you," cried Maxime. "I esteem you too much to demand guarantees. I merely mean that you must follow my advice. For example, it will be necessary that du Guénic be taken

away by his wife for at least two years ; she must show him Switzerland, Italy, Germany, — in short, all possible countries.”

“ Ah ! you confirm a fear of my director,” said the duchess, naïvely, remembering the judicious objection of the Abbé Brossette.

Maxime and d’Ajuda could not refrain from smiling at the idea of this agreement between heaven and hell.

“ To prevent Madame de Rochefide from ever seeing Calyste again,” she continued, “ we will all travel, Juste and his wife, Calyste, Sabine, and I. I will leave Clotilde with her father — ”

“ It is too soon to sing victory, madame,” said Maxime. “ I foresee enormous difficulties ; though I shall no doubt vanquish them. Your esteem and your protection are rewards which would make me commit the vilest actions, but these will be — ”

“ The vilest actions ! ” cried the duchess, interrupting this modern condottiere, and showing on her countenance as much disgust as amazement.

“ And you would share them, madame, inasmuch as I am only your agent. But are you ignorant of the degree of blindness to which Madame de Rochefide has brought your son-in-law ? I know it from Canalis and Nathan, between whom she was hesitating when Calyste threw himself into the lioness’s jaws. Béatrix has contrived to persuade that serious Breton that she has never loved any one but him ; that she is virtuous ; that Conti was merely a sentimental head-love in which neither the heart nor the rest of it had any part, — a musical love, in short ! As for Rochefide, that was

duty. So, you understand, she is virgin! — a fact she proves by forgetting her son, whom for more than a year she has not made the slightest attempt to see. The truth is, the little count will soon be twelve years old, and he finds in Madame Schontz a mother who is all the more a mother because maternity is, as you know, a passion with women of that sort. Du Guénic would let himself be cut in pieces, and would chop up his wife for Béatrix; and you think it is an easy matter to drag a man from the depths of a gulf of credulity! Ah! madame, Shakespeare's Iago would lose all his handkerchiefs. People think that Othello, or his younger brother, Orosmanes, or Saint-Preux, René, Werther, and other lovers now in possession of fame, represented love! Never did their frosty-hearted fathers know what absolute love is; Molière alone conceived it. Love, Madame la duchesse, is not loving a noble woman, a Clarissa — a great effort, faith! Love is to say to one's self: 'She whom I love is infamous; she deceives me, she will deceive me; she is an abandoned creature, she smells of the frying of hell-fire;' but we rush to her, we find there the blue of heaven, the flowers of Paradise. That is how Molière loved, and how we, scamps that we are! how we love. As for me, I weep at the great scene of Arnolphe. Now, that is how your son-in-law loves Béatrix. I shall have trouble in separating Rochefide from Madame Schontz; but Madame Schontz will no doubt lend herself to the plot; I shall study her interior. But as for Calyste and Béatrix, they will need the blows of an axe, far deeper treachery, and so base an infamy that your virtuous imagination could never descend to it —

unless indeed your director gave you a hand. You have asked the impossible, you shall be obeyed. But in spite of my settled intention to war with fire and sword, I cannot absolutely promise you success. I have known lovers who did not recoil before the most awful disillusionings. You are too virtuous to know the full power of women who are not virtuous."

"Do not enter upon those infamous actions until I have consulted the Abbé Brossette to know how far I may be your accomplice," cried the duchess, with a naïveté which disclosed what selfishness there is in piety.

"You shall be ignorant of everything, my dear mother," interposed d'Ajuda.

On the portico, while the carriage of the marquis was drawing up, d'Ajuda said to Maxime:—

"You frightened that good duchess."

"But she has no idea of the difficulty of what she asks. Let us go to the Jockey Club; Rochefide must invite me to dine with Madame Schontz to-morrow, for to-night my plan will be made, and I shall have chosen the pawns on my chess-board to carry it out. In the days of her splendor Béatrix refused to receive me; I intend to pay off that score, and I will avenge your sister-in-law so cruelly that perhaps she will find herself too well revenged."

The next day Rochefide told Madame Schontz that Maxime de Trailles was coming to dinner: That meant notifying her to display all her luxury, and prepare the choicest food for this connoisseur emeritus, whom all the women of the Madame Schontz type were in awe of. Madame Schontz herself thought as much of her

toilet as of putting her house in a state to receive this personage.

In Paris there are as many royalties as there are varieties of art, mental and moral specialties, sciences, professions; the strongest and most capable of the men who practise them has a majesty which is all his own; he is appreciated, respected by his peers, who know the difficulties of his art or profession, and whose admiration is given to the man who surmounts them. Maxime was, in the eyes of *rats* and courtesans, an extremely powerful and capable man, who had known how to make himself excessively loved. He was also admired by men who knew how difficult it is to live in Paris on good terms with creditors; in short, he had never had any other rival in elegance, deportment, and wit than the illustrious de Marsay, who frequently employed him on political missions. All this will suffice to explain his interview with the duchess, his prestige with Madame Schontz, and the authority of his words in a conference which he intended to have on the boulevard des Italiens with a young man already well-known, though lately arrived, in the Bohemia of Paris.

XXV.

A PRINCE OF BOHEMIA.

THE next day, when Maxime de Trailles rose, Finot (whom he had summoned the night before) was announced. Maxime requested his visitor to arrange, as if by accident, a breakfast at the *café Anglais*, where Finot, Couture, and Lousteau should gossip beside him. Finot, whose position toward the Comte de Trailles was that of a sub-lieutenant before a marshal of France, could refuse him nothing; it was altogether too dangerous to annoy that lion. Consequently, when Maxime came to the breakfast, he found Finot and his two friends at table and the conversation already started on Madame Schontz, about whom Couture, well manœuvred by Finot and Lousteau (Lousteau being, though not aware of it, Finot's tool), revealed to the Comte de Trailles all that he wanted to know about her.

About one o'clock, Maxime was chewing a toothpick and talking with du Tillet on Tortoni's portico, where speculation held a little Bourse, a sort of prelude to the great one. He seemed to be engaged in business, but he was really awaiting the Comte de la Palférine, who, within a given time, was certain to pass that way. The boulevard des Italiens is to-day what the Pont Neuf was in 1650; all persons known to fame pass

along it once, at least, in the course of the day. Accordingly, at the end of about ten minutes, Maxime dropped du Tillet's arm, and nodding to the young Prince of Bohemia said, smiling:—

“One word with you, count.”

The two rivals in their own principality, the one orb on its decline, the other like the rising sun, sat down upon four chairs before the Café de Paris. Maxime took care to place a certain distance between himself and some old fellows who habitually sunned themselves like wall-fruit at that hour in the afternoon, to dry out their rheumatic affections. He had excellent reasons for distrusting old men.

“Have you debts?” said Maxime, to the young count.

“If I had none, should I be worthy of being your successor?” replied La Palférine.

“In putting that question to you I don't place the matter in doubt; I only want to know if the total is respectable; if it goes to the five or the six?”

“Six what?”

“Figures; whether you owe fifty or one hundred thousand? I have owed, myself, as much as six hundred thousand.”

La Palférine raised his hat with an air as respectful as it was humorous.

“If I had sufficient credit to borrow a hundred thousand francs,” he replied, “I should forget my creditors and go and pass my life in Venice, amid masterpieces of painting and pretty women and—”

“And at my age what would you be?” asked Maxime.

“I should never reach it,” replied the young count.

Maxime returned the civility of his rival, and touched his hat lightly with an air of laughable gravity.

“That’s one way of looking at life,” he replied in the tone of one connoisseur to another. “You owe — ?”

“Oh! a mere trifle, unworthy of being confessed to an uncle; he would disinherit me for such a paltry sum, — six thousand.”

“One is often more hampered by six thousand than by a hundred thousand,” said Maxime, sententiously. “La Palférine, you’ve a bold spirit, and you have even more spirit than boldness; you can go far, and make yourself a position. Let me tell you that of all those who have rushed into the career at the close of which I now am, and who have tried to oppose me, you are the only one who has ever pleased me.”

La Palférine colored, so flattered was he by this avowal made with gracious good-humor by the leader of Parisian adventurers. This action of his own vanity was however a recognition of inferiority which wounded him; but Maxime divined that unpleasant reaction, easy to foresee in so clever a mind, and he applied a balm instantly by putting himself at the discretion of the young man.

“Will you do something for me which will facilitate my retreat from the Olympic circus by a fine marriage? I will do as much for you.”

“You make me very proud; it realizes the fable of the Rat and the Lion,” said La Palférine.

“I shall begin by lending you twenty thousand francs,” continued Maxime.

“Twenty thousand francs! I knew very well that by dint of walking up and down this boulevard —” said La Palférine, in the style of a parenthesis.

“My dear fellow, you must put yourself on a certain footing,” said Maxime, laughing. “Don’t go on your own two feet, have six; do as I do, I never get out of my tilbury.”

“But you must be going to ask me for something beyond my powers.”

“No, it is only to make a woman love you within a fortnight.”

“Is it a lorette?”

“Why?”

“Because that’s impossible; but if it concerns a woman, and a well-bred one who is also clever —”

“She is a very illustrious marquise.”

“You want her letters?” said the young count.

“Ah! you are after my own heart!” cried Maxime. “No, that’s not it.”

“Then you want me to love her?”

“Yes, in the real sense —”

“If I am to abandon the æsthetic, it is utterly impossible,” said La Palférine, “I have, don’t you see, as to women a certain honor; we may play the fool with them, but not —”

“Ah! I was not mistaken!” cried Maxime. “Do you think I’m a man to propose mere twopenny infamies to you? No, you must go, and dazzle, and conquer. My good mate, I give you twenty thousand francs, and ten days in which to triumph. Meet me to-night at Madame Schontz’.”

“I dine there.”

“Very good,” returned Maxime. “Later, when you have need of me, Monsieur le comte, you will find me,” he added in the tone of a king who binds himself, but promises nothing.

“This poor woman must have done you some deadly harm,” said La Palférine.

“Don’t try to throw a plummet-line into my waters, my boy; and let me tell you that in case of success you will obtain such powerful influence that you will be able, like me, to retire upon a fine marriage when you are bored with your bohemian life.”

“Comes there a time when it is a bore to amuse one’s self,” said La Palférine, “to be nothing, to live like the birds, to hunt the fields of Paris like a savage, and laugh at everything?”

“All things weary, even hell,” said de Trailles, laughing. “Well, this evening.”

The two *roués*, the old and the young, rose. As Maxime got into his one-horse equipage, he thought to himself: “Madame d’Espard can’t endure Béatrix; she will help me. Hôtel de Grandlieu,” he called out to the coachman, observing that Rastignac was just passing him.

Find a great man without some weakness!

The duchess, Madame du Guénic, and Clotilde were evidently weeping.

“What is the matter?” he asked the duchess.

“Calyste did not come home; this is the first time; my poor daughter is in despair.”

“Madame la duchesse,” said Maxime, drawing the pious lady into the embrasure of a window, “for Heaven’s sake keep the utmost secrecy as to my efforts,

and ask d'Ajuda to do the same; for if Calyste ever hears of our plot there will be a duel between him and me to the death. When I told you that the affair would not cost much, I meant that you would not be obliged to spend enormous sums; but I do want twenty thousand francs; the rest is my affair; there may be important places to be given, a receiver-generalship possibly."

The duchess and Maxime left the room. When Madame de Grandlieu returned to her daughter, she again listened to Sabine's dithyrambics inlaid with family facts even more cruel than those which had already crushed the young wife's happiness.

"Don't be so troubled, my darling," said the duchess. "Béatrix will pay dear for your tears and sufferings; the hand of Satan is upon her; she will meet with ten humiliations for every one she has inflicted upon you."

Madame Schontz had invited Claude Vignon, who, on several occasions, had expressed a wish to know Maxime de Trailles personally. She also invited Couture, Fabien, Bixiou, Léon de Lora, La Palférine, and Nathan. The latter was asked by Rochefide on account of Maxime. Aurélie thus expected nine guests, all men of the first ability, with the exception of du Ronceret; but the Norman vanity and the brutal ambition of the Heir were fully on a par with Claude Vignon's literary power, Nathan's poetic gift, La Palférine's *finesse*, Couture's financial eye, Bixiou's wit, Finot's shrewdness, Maxime's profound diplomacy, and Léon de Lora's genius.

Madame Schontz, anxious to appear both young and beautiful, armed herself with a toilet which that sort

of woman has the art of making. She wore a guipure pelerine of spidery texture, a gown of blue velvet, the graceful corsage of which was buttoned with opals, and her hair in bands as smooth and shining as ebony. Madame Schontz owed her celebrity as a pretty woman to the brilliancy and freshness of a complexion as white and warm as that of creoles, to a face full of spirited details, the features of which were clearly and firmly drawn, — a type long presented in perennial youth by the Comtesse Merlin, and which is perhaps peculiar to Southern races. Unhappily, little Madame Schontz had tended towards embonpoint ever since her life had become so happy and calm. Her neck, of exquisite roundness, was beginning to take on flesh about the shoulders; but in France the heads of women are principally treasured; so that fine heads will often keep an ill-formed body unobserved.

“My dear child,” said Maxime, coming in and kissing Madame Schontz on the forehead, “Rochefide wanted me to see your establishment; why, it is almost in keeping with his four hundred thousand francs a year. Well, well, he would never have had them if he had n’t known you. In less than five years you have made him save what others — Antonia, Malaga, Cadine, or Florentine — would have made him lose.”

“I am not a lorette, I am an artist,” said Madame Schontz, with a sort of dignity, “I hope to end, as they say on the stage, as the progenitrix of honest men.”

“It is dreadful, but we are all marrying,” returned Maxime, throwing himself into an armchair beside the fire. “Here am I, on the point of making a Comtesse Maxime.”

“Oh, how I should like to see her!” exclaimed Madame Schontz. “But permit me to present to you Monsieur Claude Vignon — Monsieur Claude Vignon, Monsieur de Trailles.”

“Ah, so you are the man who allowed Camille Maupin, the innkeeper of literature, to go into a convent?” cried Maxime. “After you, God. I never received such an honor. Mademoiselle des Touches treated you, monsieur, as though you were Louis XIV.”

“That is how history is written!” replied Claude Vignon. “Don’t you know that her fortune was used to free the Baron du Guénic’s estates? Ah! if she only knew that Calyste now belongs to her ex-friend” (Maxime pushed the critic’s foot, motioning to Rochefide), she would issue from her convent, I do believe, to tear him from her.”

“Upon my word, Rochefide, if I were you,” said Maxime, finding that his warning did not stop Vignon, “I should give back my wife’s fortune, so that the world couldn’t say she attached herself to Calyste from necessity.”

“Maxime is right,” remarked Madame Schontz, looking at Arthur, who colored high. “If I have helped you to gain several thousand francs a year, you couldn’t better employ them. I shall have made the happiness of husband *and* wife; what a feather in my cap!”

“I never thought of it,” replied the marquis; “but a man should be a gentleman before he’s a husband.”

“Let me tell you when is the time to be generous,” said Maxime.

“Arthur,” said Aurélie, “Maxime is right. Don’t

you see, old fellow, that generous actions are like Couture's investments? — you should make them in the nick of time."

At that moment Couture, followed by Finot, came in; and, soon after, all the guests were assembled in the beautiful blue and gold salon of the hôtel Schontz, a title which the various artists had given to their inn after Rochefide purchased it for his Ninon II. When Maxime saw La Palférine, the last to arrive, enter, he went up to his lieutenant, and taking him aside into the recess of a window, gave him notes for twenty thousand francs.

"Remember, my boy, you need n't economize them," he said, with the particular grace of a true scamp.

"There's none but you who can double the value of what you seem to give," replied La Palférine.

"Have you decided?"

"Surely, inasmuch as I take the money," said the count, with a mixture of haughtiness and jest.

"Well, then, Nathan, who is here to-night, will present you two days hence at the house of Madame la Marquise de Rochefide."

La Palférine started when he heard the name.

"You are to be madly in love with her, and, not to rouse suspicion, drink heavily, wines, liqueurs! I'll tell Aurélie to place you beside Nathan at dinner. One thing more, my boy: you and I must meet every night, on the boulevard de la Madeleine at one in the morning, — you to give me an account of progress, I to give you instructions."

"I shall be there, my master," said the young count, bowing.

“Why do you make us dine with that queer fellow dressed like the head-waiter of a restaurant?” whispered Maxime to Madame Schontz, with a sign toward Fabien du Ronceret.

“Have you never met the Heir? Du Ronceret of Alençon.”

“Monsieur,” said Maxime to Fabien, “I think you must know my friend d’Esgrignon?”

“Victurnien has ceased to know me for some time,” replied Fabien, “but we used to be very intimate in our youth.”

The dinner was one of those which are given nowhere but in Paris by these great female spendthrifts, for the choiceness of their preparations often surprise the most fastidious of guests. It was at just such a supper, at the house of a courtesan as handsome and rich as Madame Schontz, that Paganini declared he had never eaten such fare at the table of any sovereign, nor drunk such wines with any prince, nor heard such witty conversation, nor seen the glitter of such coquettish luxury.

Maxime and Madame Schontz were the first to re-enter the salon, about ten o’clock, leaving the other guests, who had ceased to tell anecdotes and were now boasting of their various good qualities, with their viscous lips glued to the glasses which they could not drain.

“Well, my dear,” said Maxime, “you are not mistaken; yes, I have come for your *beaux yeux* and for help in a great affair. You must leave Arthur; but I pledge myself to make him give you two hundred thousand francs.”

“Why should I leave the poor fellow?”

“To marry that idiot, who seems to have been sent from Alençon expressly for the purpose. He has been a judge, and I’ll have him made chief-justice in place of Émile Blondet’s father, who is getting to be eighty years old. Now, if you know how to sail your boat, your husband can be elected deputy. You will both be personages, and you can then look down on Madame la Comtesse du Bruel.”

“Never!” said Madame Schontz; “she’s a countess.”

“Has n’t he condition enough to be made a count?”

“By the bye, he bears arms,” cried Aurélie, hunting for a letter in an elegant bag hanging at the corner of the fireplace, and giving it to Maxime. “What do they mean? Here are combs.”

“He bears: per fesse argent and azure; on the first, three combs gules, two and one, crossed by three bunches grapes purpure, leaved vert, one and two; on the second, four feathers or, placed fretwise, with *Servir* for motto, and a squire’s helmet. It is not much; it seems they were ennobled under Louis XIV.; some mercer was doubtless their grandfather, and the maternal line must have made its money in wines; the du Ronceret whom the king ennobled was probably an usher. But if you get rid of Arthur and marry du Ronceret, I promise you he shall be a baron at the very least. But you see, my dear, you’ll have to soak yourself for five or six years in the provinces if you want to bury La Schontz in a baroness. That queer creature has been casting looks at you, the meaning of which is perfectly clear. You’ve got him.”

“No,” replied Aurélie, “when my hand was offered

to him he remained, like the brandies I read of to-day in the market reports, *dull*."

"I will undertake to decide him — if he is drunk. Go and see where they all are."

"It is not worth while to go; I hear no one but Bixiou, who is making jokes to which nobody listens. But I know my Arthur; he feels bound to be polite, and he is probably looking at Bixiou with his eyes shut."

"Let us go back, then."

"*Ah ça!*" said Madame Schontz, suddenly stopping short, "in whose interest shall I be working?"

"In that of Madame de Rochefide," replied Maxime, promptly. "It is impossible to reconcile her with Rochefide as long as you hold him. Her object is to recover her place as head of his household and the enjoyment of four hundred thousand francs a year."

"And she offers me only two hundred thousand! I want three hundred thousand, since the affair concerns her. What! have n't I taken care of her brat and her husband? I have filled her place in every way — and does she think to bargain with me? With that, my dear Maxime, I shall have a million; and if you'll promise me the chief-justiceship at Alençon, I can hold my own as Madame du Ronceret."

"That's settled," said Maxime.

"Oh! won't it be dull to live in that little town!" cried Aurélie, philosophically. "I have heard so much of that province from d'Esgrignon and the Val-Noble that I seem to have lived there already."

"Suppose I promise you the support of the nobility?"

"Ah! Maxime, you don't mean that? — but the pigeon won't fly."

“ And he is very ugly with his purple skin and bristles for whiskers ; he looks like a wild boar with the eyes of a bird of prey. But he ’ll make the finest chief-justice of a provincial court. Now don’t be uneasy ! in ten minutes he shall be singing to you Isabelle’s air in the fourth act of *Robert le Diable*: ‘ At thy feet I kneel ’— you promise, don’t you ? to send Arthur back to *Béatrix* ? ”

“ It will be difficult ; but perseverance wins.”

About half-past ten o’clock the guests returned to the salon for coffee. Under the circumstances in which Madame Schontz, Couture, and du Ronceret were placed, it is easy to imagine the effect produced upon the Heir by the following conversation which Maxime held with Couture in a corner and in a low voice, but so placed that Fabien could listen to them.

“ My dear Couture, if you want to lead a steady life you had better accept a receiver-generalship which Madame de Rochefide will obtain for you. Aurélie’s million will furnish the security, and you ’ll share the property in marrying her. You can be made deputy, if you know how to trim your sails ; and the premium I want for thus saving you is your vote in the Chamber.”

“ I shall always be proud to be a follower of yours.”

“ Ah ! my dear fellow, you have had quite an escape. Just imagine ! Aurélie took a fancy for that Norman from Alençon ; she asked to have him made a baron, and chief-justice in his native town, and officer of the Legion of honor ! The fool never guessed her value, and you will owe your fortune to her disappointment. You had better not leave that clever creature time for

reflection. As for me, I am already putting the irons in the fire."

And Maxime left Couture at the summit of happiness, saying to La Palférine, "Shall I drive you home, my boy?"

By eleven o'clock Aurélie was alone with Couture, Fabien, and Rochefide. Arthur was asleep on a sofa. Couture and Fabien each tried to outstay the other, without success; and Madame Sehontz finally terminated the struggle by saying to Couture,—

"Good-night, I shall see you to-morrow."

A dismissal which he took in good part.

"Mademoiselle," said Fabien, in a low voice, "because you saw me thoughtful at the offer which you indirectly made to me, do not think there was the slightest hesitation on my part. But you do not know my mother; she would never consent to my happiness."

"You have reached an age for respectful summons," retorted Aurélie, insolently. "But if you are afraid of mamma you won't do for me."

"Joséphine!" said the Heir, tenderly, passing his arm audaciously round Madame Sehontz' waist, "I thought you loved me!"

"Well?"

"Perhaps I could appease my mother, and obtain her consent."

"How?"

"If you would employ your influence —"

"To have you made baron, officer of the Legion of honor, and chief-justice at Alençon, — is that it, my friend? Listen to me: I have done so many things in my life that I am capable of virtue. I can be an

honest woman and a loyal wife; and I can push my husband very high. But I wish to be loved by him without one look or one thought being turned away from me. Does that suit you? Don't bind yourself imprudently; it concerns your whole life, my little man."

"With a woman like you I can do it blind," cried Fabien, intoxicated by the glance she gave him as much as by the liqueurs des Îles.

"You shall never repent that word, my dear; you shall be peer of France. As for that poor old fellow," she continued, looking at Rochefide, who was sound asleep, "after to-day I have d-o-n-e with him."

Fabien caught Madame Schontz round the waist and kissed her with an impulse of fury and joy, in which the double intoxication of wine and love was secondary to that of ambition.

"Remember, my dear child," she said, "the respect you ought to show to your wife; don't play the lover; leave me free to retire from my mud-hole in a proper manner. Poor Couture, who thought himself sure of wealth and a receiver-generalship!"

"I have a horror of that man," said Fabien; "I wish I might never see him again."

"I will not receive him any more," replied Madame Schontz, with a prudish little air. "Now that we have come to an understanding, my Fabien, you must go; it is one o'clock."

This little scene gave birth in the household of Arthur and Aurélie (so completely happy until now) to a phase of domestic warfare produced in the bosom of all homes by some secret and alien interest in one of the partners. The next day when Arthur awoke he

found Madame Schontz as frigid as that class of woman knows how to make herself.

“What happened last night?” he said, as he breakfasted, looking at Aurélie.

“What often happens in Paris,” she replied, “one goes to bed in damp weather and the next morning the pavements are dry and frozen so hard that they are dusty. Do you want a brush?”

“What’s the matter with you, dearest?”

“Go and find your great scarecrow of a wife!”

“My wife!” exclaimed the poor marquis.

“Don’t I know why you brought Maxime here? You mean to make up with Madame de Rochefide, who wants you perhaps for some indiscreet brat. And I, whom you call so clever, I advised you to give back her fortune! Oh! I see your scheme. At the end of five years Monsieur is tired of me. I’m getting fat, Béatrix is all bones—it will be a change for you! You are not the first I’ve known to like skeletons. Your Béatrix knows how to dress herself, that’s true; and you are a man who likes figure-heads. Besides, you want to send Monsieur du Guénic to the right-about. It will be a triumph! You’ll cut quite an appearance in the world! How people will talk of it! Why! you’ll be a hero!”

Madame Schontz did not make an end of her sarcasms for two hours after mid-day, in spite of Arthur’s protestations. She then said she was invited out to dinner, and advised her “faithless one” to go without her to the Opera, for she herself was going to the Ambigu-Comique to meet Madame de la Baudraye, a charming woman, a friend of Lousteau. Arthur pro-

posed, as proof of his eternal attachment to his little Aurélie and his detestation of his wife, to start the next day for Italy, and live as a married couple in Rome, Naples, Florence, — in short, wherever she liked, offering her a gift of sixty thousand francs.

“All that is nonsense,” she said. “It won’t prevent you from making up with your wife, and you’ll do a wise thing.”

Arthur and Aurélie parted on this formidable dialogue, he to play cards and dine at the club, she to dress and spend the evening *tête à tête* with Fabien.

Monsieur de Rochefide found Maxime at the club, and complained to him like a man who feels that his happiness is being torn from his heart by the roots, every fibre of which clung to it. Maxime listened to his moans, as persons of social politeness are accustomed to listen, while thinking of other things.

“I’m a man of good counsel in such matters, my dear fellow,” he answered. “Well, let me tell you, you are on the wrong road in letting Aurélie see how dear she is to you. Allow me to present you to Madame Antonia. There’s a heart to let. You’ll soon see La Schontz with other eyes. She is thirty-seven years old, that Schontz of yours, and Madame Antonia is only twenty-six! And what a woman! I may say she is my pupil. If Madame Schontz persists in keeping on the hind heels of her pride, don’t you know what that means?”

“Faith, no!”

“That she wants to marry, and if that’s the case, nothing can hinder her from leaving you. After a lease of six years a woman has a right to do so. Now, if

you will only listen to me, you can do a better thing for yourself. Your wife is to-day worth more than all the Schontzes and Antonias of the quartier Saint-Georges. I admit the conquest is difficult, but it is not impossible; and after all that has happened she will make you as happy as an Orgon. In any case, you must n't look like a fool; come and sup to-night with Antonia."

"No, I love Aurélie too well; I won't give her any reason to complain of me."

"Ah! my dear fellow, what a future you are preparing for yourself!" cried Maxime.

"It is eleven o'clock; she must have returned from the Ambigu," said Rochefide, leaving the club.

And he called out to his coachman to drive at top speed to the rue de la Bruyère.

Madame Schontz had given precise directions; monsieur could enter as master with the fullest understanding of madame; but, warned by the noise of monsieur's arrival, madame had so arranged that the sound of her dressing-door closing as women's doors do close when they are surprised, was to reach monsieur's ears. Then, at a corner of the piano, Fabien's hat, forgotten intentionally, was removed very awkwardly by a maid the moment after monsieur had entered the room.

"Did you go to the Ambigu, my little girl?"

"No, I changed my mind, and stayed at home to play music."

"Who came to see you?" asked the marquis, good-humoredly, seeing the hat carried off by the maid.

"No one."

At that audacious falsehood Arthur bowed his head;

he passed beneath the Caudine forks of submission. A real love descends at times to these sublime meannesses. Arthur behaved with Madame Schontz as Sabine with Calyste, and Calyste with Béatrix.

Within a week the transition from larva to butterfly took place in the young, handsome, and clever Charles-Édouard, Comte Rusticoli de la Palférine. Until this moment of his life he had lived miserably, covering his deficits with an audacity equal to that of Danton. But he now paid his debts; he now, by advice of Maxime, had a little carriage; he was admitted to the Jockey-Club and to the club of the rue de Gramont; he became supremely elegant, and he published in the "Journal des Débats" a novelette which won him in a few days a reputation which authors by profession obtain after years of toil and successes only; for there is nothing so usurping in Paris as that which ought to be ephemeral. Nathan, very certain that the count would never publish anything else, lauded the graceful and presuming young man so highly to Béatrix that she, spurred by the praise of the poet, expressed a strong desire to see this king of the vagabonds of good society.

"He will be all the more delighted to come here," replied Nathan, "because, as I happen to know, he has fallen in love with you to the point of committing all sorts of follies."

"But I am told he has already committed them."

"No, not all; he has not yet committed that of falling in love with a virtuous woman."

Some ten days after the scheme plotted on the boulevard between Maxime and his henchman, the seductive Charles-Édouard, the latter, to whom Nature

had given, no doubt sarcastically, a face of charming melancholy, made his first irruption into the nest of the dove of the rue de Chartres, who took for his reception an evening when Calyste was obliged to go to a party with his wife.

If you should ever meet La Palférine you will understand perfectly the success obtained in a single evening by that sparkling mind, that animated fancy, especially if you take into consideration the admirable adroitness of the showman who consented to superintend this *début*. Nathan was a good comrade, and he made the young count shine, as a jeweller showing off an ornament in hopes to sell it, makes the diamonds glitter. La Palférine was, discreetly, the first to withdraw; he left Nathan and the marquise together, relying on the collaboration of the celebrated author, which was admirable. Seeing that Béatrix was quite astounded, Raoul put fire into her heart by pretended reticences which stirred the fibres of a curiosity she did not know she possessed. Nathan hinted that La Palférine's wit was not so much the cause of his success with women as his superiority in the art of love; a statement which magnified the count immensely.

This is the place to record a new effect of that great law of contraries, which produces so many crises in the human heart and accounts for such varied eccentricities that we are forced to remember it sometimes as well as its counterpart, the law of similitudes. All courtesans preserve in the depths of their heart a perennial desire to recover their liberty; to this they would sacrifice everything. They feel this antithetical need with such intensity that it is rare to meet with one of these women

who has not aspired several times to a return to virtue through love. They are not discouraged by the most cruel deceptions. On the other hand, women restrained by their education, by the station they occupy, chained by the rank of their families, living in the midst of opulence, and wearing a halo of virtue, are drawn at times, secretly be it understood, toward the tropical regions of love. These two natures of woman, so opposed to each other, have at the bottom of their hearts, the one that faint desire for virtue, the other that faint desire for libertinism which Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the first to have the courage to diagnose. In one, it is a last reflexion of the ray divine that is not extinct; in the other, it is the last remains of our primitive clay.

This claw of the beast was rapped, this hair of the devil was pulled by Nathan with extreme cleverness. The marquise began to ask herself seriously if, up to the present time, she had not been the dupe of her head, and whether her education was complete. Vice — what is it? Possibly only the desire to know everything.

XXVI.

DISILLUSIONS — IN ALL BUT LA FONTAINE'S FABLES.

THE next day Calyste seemed to Béatrix just what he was: a perfect and loyal gentleman without imagination or cleverness. In Paris, a man called clever must have spontaneous brilliancy, as the fountains have water; men of the world and Parisians in general are in that way very clever. But Calyste loved too deeply, he was too much absorbed in his own sentiments to perceive the change in Béatrix, and to satisfy her need by displaying new resources. To her, he seemed pale indeed, after the brilliancy of the night before, and he caused not the faintest emotion to the hungry Béatrix. A great love is a credit opened to a power so voracious that bankruptcy is sure to come sooner or later.

In spite of the fatigue of this day (the day when a woman is bored by a lover) Béatrix trembled with fear at the thought of a possible meeting between La Palferine and Calyste, a man of courage without assertion. She hesitated to see the count again; but the knot of her hesitation was cut by a decisive event.

Béatrix had taken the third of a box at the Opera, obscurely situated on the lower tier for the purpose of not being much in sight. For the last few days Calyste, grown bolder, had escorted the marquise to her box,

placing himself behind her, and timing their arrival at a late hour so as to meet no one in the corridors. Béatrix, on these occasions, left the box alone before the end of the last act, and Calyste followed at a distance to watch over her, although old Antoine was always there to attend his mistress. Maxime and La Palférine had studied this strategy, which was prompted by respect for the proprieties, also by that desire for concealment which characterizes the idolaters of the little god, and also, again, by the fear which oppresses all women who have been constellations in the world and whom love has caused to fall from their zodiacal eminence. Public humiliation is dreaded as an agony more cruel than death itself. But, by a manœuvre of Maxime's, that blow to her pride, that outrage which women secure of their rank in Olympus cast upon others who have fallen from their midst, was now to descend on Béatrix.

At a performance of "Lucia," which ends, as every one knows, with one of the finest triumphs of Rubini, Madame de Rochefide, whom Antoine had not yet come to fetch, reached the peristyle of the opera-house by the lower corridor just as the staircase was crowded by fashionable women ranged on the stairs or standing in groups below it, awaiting the announcement of their carriages. Béatrix was instantly recognized; whispers which soon became a murmur arose in every group. In a moment the crowd dispersed; the marquise was left alone like a leper. Calyste dared not, seeing his wife on the staircase, advance to accompany her, though twice she vainly cast him a tearful glance, a prayer, that he would come to her. At that moment, La Pal-

férine, elegant, superb, charming, left two ladies with whom he had been talking, and came down to the marquise.

“Take my arm,” he said, bowing, “and walk proudly out. I will find your carriage.”

“Will you come home with me and finish the evening?” she answered, getting into her carriage and making room for him.

La Palférine said to his groom, “Follow the carriage of madame,” and then he jumped into it beside her to the utter stupefaction of Calyste, who stood for a moment planted on his two legs as if they were lead. It was the sight of him standing thus, pale and livid, that caused Béatrix to make the sign to La Palférine to enter her carriage. Doves can be Robespierres in spite of their white wings. Three carriages reached the rue de Chartres with thundering rapidity, — that of Calyste, that of the marquise, and that of La Palférine.

“Oh! you here?” said Béatrix, entering her salon on the arm of the young count, and finding Calyste, whose horse had outstripped those of the other carriages.

“Then you know monsieur?” said Calyste, furiously.

“Monsieur le Comte de la Palférine was presented to me ten days ago by Nathan,” she replied; “but you, monsieur, *you* have known me four years! —”

“And I am ready, madame,” said Charles-Édouard, “to make the Marquise d’Espard repent to her third generation for being the first to turn away from you.”

“Ah! it was *she*, was it?” cried Béatrix; “I will make her rue it.”

“To revenge yourself thoroughly,” said the young

man in her ear, "you ought to recover your husband; and I am capable of bringing him back to you."

The conversation, thus begun, went on till two in the morning, without allowing Calyste, whose anger was again and again repressed by a look from Béatrix, to say one word to her in private. La Palférine, though he did not like Béatrix, showed a superiority of grace, good taste, and cleverness equal to the evident inferiority of Calyste, who wriggled in his chair like a worm cut in two, and actually rose three times as if to box the ears of La Palférine. The third time that he made a dart forward, the young count said to him, "Are you in pain, monsieur?" in a manner which sent Calyste back to his chair, where he sat as rigid as a mile-stone.

The marquise conversed with the ease of a Célimène, pretending to ignore that Calyste was there. La Palférine had the cleverness to depart after a brilliant witticism, leaving the two lovers to a quarrel.

Thus, by Maxime's machinations, the fire of discord flamed in the separate households of Monsieur and of Madame de Rochefide. The next day, learning the success of this last scene from La Palférine at the Jockey Club, where the young count was playing whist, Maxime went to the hôtel Schontz to ascertain with what success Aurélie was rowing her boat.

"My dear," said Madame Schontz, laughing at Maxime's expression, "I am at an end of my expedients. Rochefide is incurable. I end my career or gallantry by perceiving that cleverness is a misfortune."

"Explain to me that remark."

"In the first place, my dear friend, I have kept Arthur for the last week to a regimen of kicks on the

shin and perpetual wrangling and jarring ; in short, all we have that is most disagreeable in our business. ' You are ill,' he says to me with paternal sweetness, ' for I have been good to you always and I love you to adoration.' ' You are to blame for one thing, my dear,' I answered ; ' you bore me.' ' Well, if I do, haven't you the wittiest and handsomest young man in Paris to amuse you?' said the poor man. I was caught. I actually felt I loved him."

" Ah!" said Maxime.

" How could I help it? Feeling is stronger than we ; one can't resist such things. So I changed pedals. I began to entice my judicial wild-boar, now turned like Arthur to a sheep ; I gave him Arthur's sofa. Heavens! how he bored me. But, you understand, I had to have Fabien there to let Arthur surprise us."

" Well," cried Maxime, " go on ; what happened? Was Arthur furious?"

" You know nothing about it, my old fellow. When Arthur came in and ' surprised ' us, Fabien and me, he retreated on the tips of his toes to the dining-room, where he began to clear his throat, ' broum, broum!' and cough, and knock the chairs about. That great fool of a Fabien, to whom, of course, I can't explain the whole matter, was frightened. There, my dear Maxime, is the point we have reached."

Maxime nodded his head, and played for a few moments with his cane.

" I have known such natures," he said. " And the only way for you to do is to pitch Arthur out of the window and lock the door upon him. This is how you

must manage it. Play that scene over again with Fabien; when Arthur surprises you, give Fabien a glance Arthur can't mistake; if he gets angry, that will end the matter; if he still says, 'broum, broum!' it is just as good; you can end it a better way."

"How?"

"Why, get angry, and say 'I believed you loved me, respected me; but I see you've no feeling at all, not even jealousy,' — you know the tirade. 'In a case like this, Maxime' (bring me in) 'would kill his man on the spot' (then weep). 'And Fabien, he' (mortify him by comparing him with that fellow), 'Fabien whom I love, Fabien would have drawn a dagger and stabbed you to the heart. Ah, that's what it is to love! Farewell, monsieur; take back your house and all your property; I shall marry Fabien; *he* gives me his name; *he* marries me in spite of his old mother — but *you* —'"

"I see! I see!" cried Madame Schontz. "I'll be superb! Ah! Maxime, there will never be but one Maxime, just as there's only one de Marsay."

"La Palférine is better than I," replied the Comte de Trailles, modestly. "He'll make his mark."

"La Palférine has tongue, but you have fist and loins. What weights you've carried! what cuffs you've given!"

"La Palférine has all that, too; he is deep and he is educated, whereas I am ignorant," replied Maxime. "I have seen Rastignac, who has made an arrangement with the Keeper of the Seals. Fabien is to be appointed chief-justice at once, and officer of the Legion of honor after one year's service."

"I shall make myself *dévoté*," said Madame Schontz,

accenting that speech in a manner which obtained a nod of approbation from Maxime.

“Priests can do more than even we,” he replied sententiously.

“Ah! can they?” said Madame Schontz. “Then I may still find some one in the provinces fit to talk to. I’ve already begun my rôle. Fabien has written to his mother that grace has enlightened me; and he has fascinated the good woman with my million and the chief-justiceship. She consents that we shall live with her, and sends me her portrait, and wants mine. If Cupid looked at hers he would die on the spot. Come, go away, Maxime. I must put an end to my poor Arthur to-night, and it breaks my heart.”

Two days later, as they met on the threshold of the Jockey Club, Charles-Édouard said to Maxime, “It is done.”

The words, which contained a drama accomplished in part by vengeance, made Maxime smile.

“Now come in and listen to Rochefide bemoaning himself; for you and Aurélie have both touched goal together. Aurélie has turned Arthur out of doors, and now it is our business to get him a home. He must give Madame du Ronceret three hundred thousand francs and take back his wife; you and I must prove to him that Béatrix is superior to Aurélie.”

“We have ten days before us to do it in,” said Charles-Édouard, “and in all conscience that’s not too much.”

“What will you do when the shell bursts?”

“A man has always mind enough, give him time to collect it; I’m superb at that sort of preparation.”

The two conspirators entered the salon together, and found Rochefide aged by two years; he had not even put on his corset, his beard had sprouted, and all his elegance was gone.

“ Well, my dear marquis? ” said Maxime.

“ Ah, my dear fellow, my life is wrecked. ”

Arthur talked for ten minutes, and Maxime listened gravely, thinking all the while of his own marriage, which was now to take place within a week.

“ My dear Arthur, ” he replied at last; “ I told you the only means I knew to keep Aurélie, but you would n’t — ”

“ What was it? ”

“ Did n’t I advise you to go and sup with Antonia? ”

“ Yes, you did. But how could I? I love, and you, you only make love — ”

“ Listen to me, Arthur; give Aurélie three hundred thousand francs for that little house, and I’ll promise to find some one to suit you better. I’ll talk to you about it later, for there’s d’Ajuda making signs that he wants to speak to me. ”

And Maxime left the inconsolable man for the representative of a family in need of consolation.

“ My dear fellow, ” said d’Ajuda in his ear, “ the duchess is in despair. Calyste is having his trunks packed secretly, and he has taken out a passport. Sabine wants to follow them, surprise Béatrix, and maul her. She is pregnant, and it takes the turn of murderous ideas; she has actually and openly bought pistols. ”

“ Tell the duchess that Madame de Rochefide will not leave Paris, but within a fortnight she will have

left Calyste. Now, d' Ajuda, shake hands. Neither you nor I have ever said, or known, or done anything about all this; we admire the chances of life, that's all."

"The duchess has already made me swear on the holy Gospels to hold my tongue."

"Will you receive my wife a month hence?"

"With pleasure."

"Then every one, all round, will be satisfied," said Maxime. "Only remind the duchess that she must make that journey to Italy with the du Guénics, and the sooner the better."

For ten days Calyste was made to bear the weight of an anger all the more invincible because it was in part the effect of a real passion. Béatrix now experienced the love so brutally but faithfully described to the Duchesse de Grandlieu by Maxime de Trailles. Perhaps no well-organized beings exist who do not experience that terrible passion once in the course of their lives. The marquise felt herself mastered by a superior force, — by a young man on whom her rank and quality did not impose, who, as noble as herself, regarded her with an eye both powerful and calm, and from whom her greatest feminine arts and efforts could with difficulty obtain even a smile of approval. In short, she was oppressed by a tyrant who never left her that she did not fall to weeping, bruised and wounded, yet believing herself to blame. Charles-Édouard played upon Madame de Rochefide the same comedy Madame de Rochefide had played on Calyste for the last six months.

Since her public humiliation at the Opera, Béatrix had never ceased to treat Monsieur du Guénic on the basis of the following proposition: —

“ You have preferred your wife and the opinion of the world to me. If you wish to prove that you love me, sacrifice your wife and the world to me. Abandon Sabine, and let us live in Switzerland, Italy, or Germany.”

Intrenched in that hard *ultimatum*, she established the blockade which women declare by frigid glances, disdainful gestures, and a certain fortress-like demeanor, if we may so call it. She thought herself delivered from Calyste, supposing that he would never dare to break openly with the Grandlieus. To desert Sabine, to whom Mademoiselle des Touches had left her fortune, would doom him to penury.

But Calyste, half-mad with despair, had secretly obtained a passport, and had written to his mother begging her to send him at once a considerable sum of money. While awaiting the arrival of these funds he set himself to watch Béatrix, consumed by the fury of Breton jealousy. At last, nine days after the communication made by La Palférine to Maxime at the club; Calyste, to whom his mother had forwarded thirty thousand francs, went to Madame de Rochefide's house with the firm intention of forcing the blockade, driving away La Palférine, and leaving Paris with his pacified angel. It was one of those terrible alternatives in which women who have hitherto retained some little respect for themselves plunge at once and forever into the degradations of vice, — though it is possible to return thence to virtue. Until this moment Madame de Rochefide had regarded herself as a virtuous woman in heart, upon whom two passions had fallen; but to adore Charles-Édonard and still let Calyste adore her, would be to lose her self-esteem, — for where deception begins, infamy begins.

She had given rights to Calyste, and no human power could prevent the Breton from falling at her feet and watering them with the tears of an absolute repentance. Many persons are surprised at the glacial insensibility under which women extinguish their loves. But if they did not thus efface their past, their lives could have no dignity; they could never maintain themselves against the fatal familiarity to which they had once submitted. In the entirely new situation in which Béatrix found herself, she might have evaded the alternatives presented to her by Calyste had La Palférine entered the room; but the vigilance of her old footman, Antoine, defeated her.

Hearing a carriage stop before the door, she said to Calyste, "Here come visitors!" and she rushed forward to prevent a scene.

Antoine, however, as a prudent man, had told La Palférine that Madame la marquise was out.

When Béatrix heard from the old servant who had called and the answer he had given, she replied, "Very good," and returned to the salon, thinking: "I will escape into a convent; I will make myself a nuu."

Calyste, meantime, had opened the window and seen his rival.

"Who came?" he said to Béatrix on her return.

"I don't know; Antoine is still below."

"It was La Palférine."

"Possibly."

"You love him, and that is why you are blaming and reproaching me; I saw him!"

"You saw him?"

"I opened the window."

Béatrix fell half fainting on the sofa. Then she negotiated in order to gain time ; she asked to have the journey postponed for a week, under pretence of making preparations ; inwardly resolving to turn Calyste off if in that way she could satisfy La Palférine, — for such are the wretched calculations and the fiery anguish concealed within these lives which have left the rails along which the great social train rolls on.

When Calyste had left her, Béatrix felt so wretched, so profoundly humiliated, that she went to bed ; she was really ill ; the violent struggle which wrung her heart seemed to reach a physical reaction, and she sent for the doctor ; but at the same time she despatched to La Palférine the following letter, in which she revenged herself on Calyste with a sort of rage : —

To Monsieur le Comte de la Palférine.

MY FRIEND, — Come and see me ; I am in despair. Antoine sent you away when your arrival would have put an end to one of the most horrible nightmares of my life and delivered me from a man I hate, and whom I trust never to see again. I love you only in this world, and I can never again love any one but you, though I have the misfortune not to please you as I fain would — ”

She wrote four pages which, beginning thus, ended in an exaltation too poetic for typography, in which she compromised herself so completely that the letter closed with these words : “ Am I sufficiently at your mercy ? Ah ! nothing will cost me anything if it only proves to you how much you are loved.” And she signed

the letter, a thing she had never done for Conti or Calyste.

The next day, at the hour when La Palférine called, Béatrix was in her bath, and Antoine begged him to wait. He, in his turn, saw Calyste sent away; for du Guénic, hungry for love, came early. La Palférine was standing at the window, watching his rival's departure, when Béatrix entered the salon.

"Ah! Charles," she cried, expecting what had happened, "you have ruined me!"

"I know it, madame," replied La Palférine, tranquilly. "You have sworn to love me alone; you have offered to give me a letter in which you will write your motives for destroying yourself, so that, in case of infidelity, I may poison you without fear of human justice, — as if superior men needed to have recourse to poison for revenge! You have written to me: 'Nothing will cost me anything if it only proves to you how much you are loved.' Well, after that, I find a contradiction between those words and your present remark that I have ruined you. I must know now if you have had the courage to break with du Guénic."

"Ah! you have your revenge upon him in advance," she cried, throwing her arms around his neck. "Henceforth, you and I are forever bound together."

"Madame," said the prince of Bohemia, coldly, "if you wish me for your friend, I consent; but on one condition only."

"Condition!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; the following condition. You must be reconciled to Monsieur de Rochefide; you must recover the honor of your position; you must return to your hand-

some house in the rue d'Anjou and be once more one of the queens of Paris. You can do this by making Rochefide play a part in politics, and by putting into your own conduct the persistency which Madame d'Espard has displayed. That is the situation necessary for the woman to whom I do the honor to give myself."

"But you forget that Monsieur de Rochefide's consent is necessary."

"Oh, my dear child," said La Palférine, "we have arranged all that; I have given my word of honor as a gentleman that you are worth all the Schontzes of the quartier Saint-Georges, and you must fulfil my pledge."

For the next week Calyste went every day to Madame de Rochefide's door, only to be refused by Antoine, who said with a studied face, "Madame is ill."

From there Calyste hurried to La Palférine's lodging, where the valet answered, "Monsieur le comte is away, hunting." Each time this happened the Breton baron left a letter for La Palférine.

On the ninth day Calyste received a line from La Palférine, making an appointment to receive him. He hurried to his lodgings and found the count, but in company with Maxime de Trailles, to whom the young *roué* no doubt wished to give proof of his *savoir-faire* by making him a witness of this scene.

"Monsieur le baron," began Charles-Édouard, tranquilly, "here are the six letters you have done me the honor to write to me. They are, as you see, safe and sound; they have not been unsealed. I knew in advance what they were likely to contain, having learned that you have been seeking me since the day when I looked at you from the window of a house from which you had

looked at me on the previous day. I thought I had better ignore all mistaken provocations. Between ourselves, I am sure you have too much good taste to be angry with a woman for no longer loving you. It is always a bad means of recovering her to seek a quarrel with the one preferred. But, in the present case, your letters have a radical fault, a nullity, as the lawyers say. You have too much good sense, I am sure, to complain of a husband who takes back his wife. Monsieur de Rochefide has felt that the position of the marquise was undignified. You will, therefore, no longer find Madame de Rochefide in the rue de Chartres, but — six months hence, next winter — in the hôtel de Rochefide. You flung yourself rather heedlessly into the midst of a reconciliation between husband and wife, — which you provoked yourself by not saving Madame de Rochefide from the humiliation to which she was subjected at the Opera. On coming away, the marquise, to whom I had already carried certain amicable proposals from her husband, took me up in her carriage, and her first words were, ‘Bring Arthur back to me!’”

“Ah! yes,” cried Calyste, “she was right; I was wanting in true devotion.”

“Unhappily, monsieur, Rochefide was living with one of those atrocious women, Madame Schontz, who had long been expecting him to leave her. She had counted on Madame de Rochefide’s failure in health, and expected some day to see herself marquise; finding her castles in the air thus scattered, she determined to revenge herself on husband and wife. Such women, monsieur, will put out one of their own eyes to put out two of their enemy. La Schontz, who has just left Paris, has put out

six! If I had had the imprudence to love the marquise, Madame Schontz would have put out eight. You see now that you are in need of an oculist."

Maxime could not help smiling at the change that came over Calyste's face; which turned deadly pale as his eyes were opened to his situation.

"Would you believe, Monsieur le baron, that that unworthy woman has given her hand to the man who furnished the means for her revenge? Ah! these women! You can understand now why Arthur and his wife should have retired for a time to their delightful little country-house at Nogent-sur-Marne. They'll recover their eyesight there. During their stay in the country the hôtel de Rochefide is to be renovated, and the marquise intends to display on her return a princely splendor. When a woman so noble, the victim of conjugal love, finds courage to return to her duty, the part of a man who adores her as you do, and admires her as I admire her, is to remain her friend although we can do nothing more. You will excuse me, I know, for having made Monsieur le Comte de Trailles a witness of this explanation; but I have been most anxious to make myself perfectly clear throughout. As for my own sentiments, I am, above all, desirous to say to you, that although I admire Madame de Rochefide for her intellect, she is supremely displeasing to me as a woman."

"And so end our noblest dreams, our celestial loves!" said Calyste, dumfounded by so many revelations and disillusionments.

"Yes, in the serpent's tail," said Maxime, "or, worse still, in the vial of an apothecary. I never knew a first

love that did not end foolishly. Ah! Monsieur le baron, all that man has of the divine within him finds its food in heaven only. That is what justifies the lives of us *roués*. For myself, I have pondered this question deeply; and, as you know, I was married yesterday. I shall be faithful to my wife, and I advise you to return to Madame du Guénic, — but not for three months. Don't regret Béatrix; she is the model of a vain and empty nature, without strength, coquettish for self-glorification only, a Madame d'Espard without her profound political capacity, a woman without heart and without head, floundering in evil. Madame de Rochefide loves Madame de Rochefide only. She would have parted you from Madame du Guénic without the possibility of return, and then she would have left you in the lurch without remorse. In short, that woman is as incomplete for vice as she is for virtue."

"I don't agree with you, Maxime" said La Palferine. "I think she will make the most delightful mistress of a salon in all Paris."

Calyste went away, after shaking hands with Charles-Édouard and Maxime and thanking them for having pricked his illusions.

Three days later, the Duchesse de Grandlien, who had not seen her daughter Sabine since the morning when this conference took place, went to the hôtel du Guénic early in the day and found Calyste in his bath, with Sabine beside him working at some adornment for the future *layette*.

"What has happened to you, my children?" asked the excellent duchess.

"Nothing but good, dear mamma," replied Sabine,

raising her eyes, radiant with happiness, to her mother ;
“ we have been playing the fable of ‘The Two Pigeons,’ that is all.” —

Calyste held out his hand to his wife, and pressed hers so tenderly with a look so eloquent, that she said in a whisper to the duchess, —

“ I am loved, mother, and forever ! ”

THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

BY H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

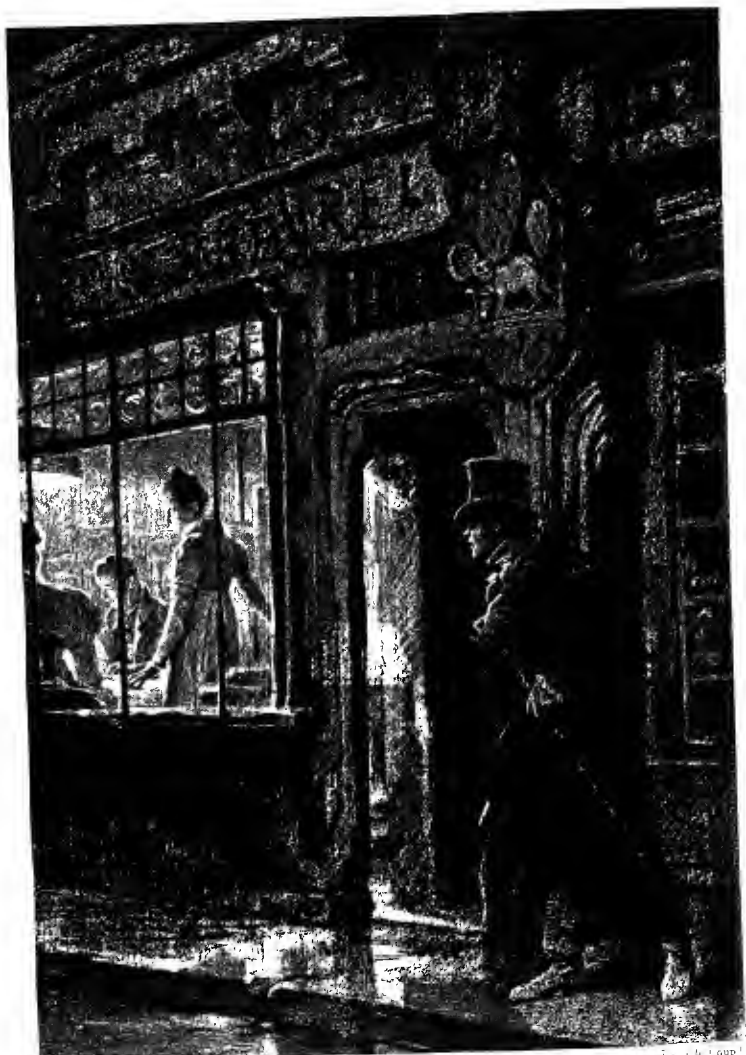
FAME AND SORROW

(LA MAISON DU CHAT-QUI-PELOTE)

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Laurent Desbroux

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“The shop, which was not yet lighted up, formed a dark vista through which the merchant’s dining-room was seen.”

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FAME AND SORROW.¹

DEDICATED TO MADEMOISELLE MARIE DE MONTHEAU.

ABOUT the middle of the rue Saint-Denis, and near the corner of the rue du Petit-Lion, there stood, not very long ago, one of those precious houses which enable historians to reconstruct by analogy the Paris of former times. The frowning walls of this shabby building seemed to have been originally decorated by hieroglyphics. What other name could a passing observer give to the X's and the Y's traced upon them by the transversal or diagonal pieces of wood which showed under the stucco through a number of little parallel cracks? Evidently, the jar of each passing carriage shook the old joists in their plaster coatings.

¹ This was the title (*Gloire et Malheur*) under which the story was first published in 1830. The name was changed in 1842 to *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*. The awkwardness of the title in English (The House of the Cat-playing-ball) leads the translator to use the original name given by Balzac.

The venerable building was covered with a triangular roof, a shape of which no specimen will exist much longer in Paris. This roof, twisted out of line by the inclemencies of Parisian weather, overhung the street by about three feet, as much to protect the door-steps from the rain as to shelter the wall of the garret and its frameless window; for the upper storey was built of planks, nailed one above the other like slates, so as not to overweight the construction beneath it.

On a rainy morning in the month of March, a young man carefully wrapped in a cloak was standing beneath the awning of a shop directly opposite to the old building, which he examined with the enthusiasm of an archæologist; for, in truth, this relic of the bourgeoisie of the sixteenth century presented more than one problem to the mind of an intelligent observer. Each storey had its own peculiarity; on the first were four long, narrow windows very close to each other, with wooden squares in place of glass panes to the lower sash, so as to give the uncertain light by which a clever shopkeeper can make his goods match any color desired by a customer.

The young man seemed to disdain this important part of the house; in fact, his eyes had not even rested on it. The windows of the second floor, the raised outer blinds of which gave to sight through large panes of Bohemian glass small muslin curtains of a reddish tinge, seemed also not to interest him. His attention centred

on the third storey, — on certain humble windows, the wooden frames of which deserved a place in the Conservatory of Arts and Manufactures as specimens of the earliest efforts of French joinery. These windows had little panes of so green a glass that had he not possessed an excellent pair of eyes the young man could not have seen the blue-checked curtains which hid the mysteries of the room from the gaze of the profane. Occasionally the watcher, as if tired of his abortive watch, or annoyed by the silence in which the house was buried, dropped his eyes to the lower regions. An involuntary smile would then flicker on his lips as he glanced at the shop, where, indeed, were certain things that were laughable enough.

A formidable beam of wood, resting horizontally on four pillars which appeared to bend under the weight of the decrepit house, had received as many and diverse coats of paint as the cheek of an old duchess. At the middle of this large beam, slightly carved, was an antique picture representing a cat playing ball. It was this work of art which made the young man smile; and it must be owned that not the cleverest of modern painters could have invented a more comical design. The animal held in one of its fore-paws a racket as big as itself, and stood up on its hind paws to aim at an enormous ball which a gentleman in a brocaded coat was tossing to it. Design, colors, and accessories were all

treated in a way to inspire a belief that the artist meant to make fun of both merchant and customers. Time, by altering the crude colors, had made the picture still more grotesque through certain bewildering changes, which could not fail to trouble a conscientious observer. For instance, the ringed tail of the cat was cut apart in such a way that the end might be taken for an onlooker, so thick, long, and well-covered were the tails of the cats of our ancestors. To the right of the picture, on a blue ground, which imperfectly concealed the rotten wood, could be read the name "GUILLAUME," and to the left the words "SUCCESSOR TO THE SIEUR CHEVREL."

Sun and rain had tarnished or washed off the greater part of the gilding parsimoniously bestowed upon the letters of this inscription, in which U's stood in place of V's, and *vice versa*, according to the rules of our ancient orthography. In order to bring down the pride of those who think the world is daily growing cleverer and wittier, and that modern claptrappery surpasses everything that went before, it may be well to mention here that such signs as these, the etymology of which seems fantastic to many Parisian merchants, are really the dead pictures of once living realities by which our lively ancestors contrived to entice customers into their shops. Thus, "The Sow a-Spinning," "The Green Monkey," and so forth, were live animals in cages, whose clever tricks delighted the passers in the streets, and whose

training proved the patience of the shopkeepers of the fifteenth century. Such natural curiosities brought better profits to their fortunate possessors than the fine names, "Good Faith," "Providence," "The Grace of God," "The Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist," which are still to be seen in that same rue Saint-Denis.

However, our unknown young man was certainly not stationed there to admire the cat, which a moment's notice sufficed to fix in his memory. He too, had his peculiarities. His cloak, flung about him after the manner of antique drapery, left to sight the elegant shoes and white silk stockings on his feet, which were all the more noticeable in the midst of that Parisian mud, several spots of which seemed to prove the haste with which he had made his way there. No doubt he had just left a wedding or a ball, for at this early hour of the morning he held a pair of white gloves in his hand, and the curls of his black hair, now uncurled and tumbling on his shoulders, seemed to indicate a style of wearing it called "Caracalla," a fashion set by the painter David and his school, and followed with that devotion to Greek and Roman ideas and shapes which marked the earlier years of this century.

In spite of the noise made by a few belated kitchen-gardeners as they galloped their cartloads of produce to the markets, the street was still hushed in that calm stillness the magic of which is known only to those who

wander about a deserted Paris at the hour when its nightly uproar ceases for a moment, then reawakes and is heard in the distance like the voice of Ocean.

This singular young man must have seemed as odd to the shopkeepers of the Cat-playing-ball as the Cat-playing-ball seemed to him. A dazzling white cravat made his harassed white face even paler than it really was. The fire of his black eyes, that were sparkling and yet gloomy, harmonized with the eccentric outline of his face, and with his large, sinuous mouth, which contracted when he smiled. His forehead, wrinkling under any violent annoyance, had something fatal about it. The forehead is surely the most prophetic feature of the face. When that of this unknown young man expressed anger, the creases which immediately showed upon it excited a sort of terror, through the force of passion which brought them there; but the moment he recovered his calmness, so easily shaken, the brow shone with a luminous grace that embellished the whole countenance, where joy and grief, love, anger, and disdain flashed forth in so communicative a way that the coldest of men was inevitably impressed.

It chanced that the man was so annoyed at the moment when some one hastily opened the garret window, that he missed seeing three joyous faces, plump, and white, and rosy, but also as commonplace as those given to the statues of Commerce on public buildings. These

three heads framed by the open window, recalled the puffy angel faces scattered among the clouds, which usually accompany the Eternal Father. The apprentices were inhaling the emanations from the street with an eagerness which showed how hot and mephitic the atmosphere of their garret must have been. The elder of the three clerks, after pointing out to his companions the stranger in the street, disappeared for a moment and then returned, holding in his hand an instrument whose inflexible metal has lately been replaced by supple leather. Thereupon a mischievous expression came upon all three faces as they looked at the singular watcher, while the elder proceeded to shower him with a fine white rain, the odor of which proved that three chins had just been shaved. Standing back in the room on tiptoe to enjoy their victim's rage, the clerks all stopped laughing when they saw the careless disdain with which the young man shook the drops from his mantle, and the profound contempt apparent on his face when he raised his eyes to the now vacant window.

Just then a delicate white hand lifted the lower part of one of the roughly made windows on the third floor by means of those old-fashioned grooves, whose pulleys so often let fall the heavy sashes they were intended to hold up. The watcher was rewarded for his long waiting. The face of a young girl, fresh as the white lilies that bloom on the surface of a lake, appeared, framed

by a ruffled muslin cap, which gave a delightful look of innocence to the head. Her neck and shoulders, though covered with some brown stuff, were plainly seen through rifts in the garment opened by movements made in sleep. No sign of constraint marred the ingenuous expression of that face nor the calm of those eyes, immortalized already in the sublime conceptions of Raffaele; here was the same grace, the same virgin tranquillity now become proverbial. A charming contrast was produced by the youth of the cheeks, on which sleep had thrown into relief a superabundance of life, and the age of the massive window, with its coarse frame now blackened by time. Like those day-blooming flowers which in the early morning have not as yet unfolded their tunics tightly closed against the chill of night, the young girl, scarcely awake, let her eyes wander across the neighboring roofs and upward to the sky; then she lowered them to the gloomy precincts of the street, where they at once encountered those of her adorer. No doubt her innate coquetry caused her a pang of mortification at being seen in such dishabille, for she quickly drew back, the worn-out sash-pulley turned, the window came down with a rapidity which has earned, in our day, an odious name for that naive invention of our ancestors, and the vision disappeared. The brightest of the stars of the morning seemed to the young man to have passed suddenly under a cloud.

While these trifling events were occurring, the heavy inside shutters which protected the thin glass of the windows in the shop, called the House of the Cat-playing-ball, had been opened as if by magic. The door, with its old fashioned knocker, was set back against the inner wall by a serving-man, who might have been contemporary with the sign itself, and whose shaking hand fastened to the picture a square bit of cloth, on which were embroidered in yellow silk the words, "Guillaume, successor to Chevrel." More than one pedestrian would have been unable to guess the business in which the said Guillaume was engaged. Through the heavy iron bars which protected the shop window on the outside, it was difficult to see the bales wrapped in brown linen, which were as numerous as a school of herrings on their way across the ocean. In spite of the apparent simplicity of this gothic façade, Monsieur Guillaume was among the best known drapers in Paris, one whose shop was always well supplied, whose business relations were widely extended, and whose commercial honor no one had ever doubted. If some of his fellow-tradesmen made contracts with the government without possessing cloth enough to fulfil them, he was always able and willing to lend them enough to make up deficiencies, however large the number contracted for might be. The shrewd dealer knew a hundred ways of drawing the lion's share of profits to

himself without being forced, like the others, to beg for influence, or do base things, or give rich presents. If the tradesmen he thus assisted could not pay the loan except by long drafts on good security, he referred them to his notary, like an accommodating man, and managed to get a double profit out of the affair; an expedient which led to a remark, almost proverbial in the rue Saint-Denis, "God keep us from the notary of Monsieur Guillaume!"

The old dealer happened, as if by some miraculous chance, to be standing at the open door of his shop just as the servant, having finished that part of his morning duty, withdrew. Monsieur Guillaume looked up and down the rue Saint-Denis, then at the adjoining shops, and then at the weather, like a man landing at Havre who sees France again after a long voyage. Having fully convinced himself that nothing had changed since he went to sleep the night before, he now perceived the man doing sentry duty, who, on his side, was examining the patriarch of drapery very much as Humboldt must have examined the first electric eel which he saw in America.

Monsieur Guillaume wore wide breeches of black velvet, dyed stockings, and square shoes with silver buckles; his coat, made with square lappels, square skirts, and square collar, wrapped a figure, slightly bent, in its loose folds of greenish cloth, and was fastened with

large, white, metal buttons tarnished from use ; his gray hair was so carefully combed and plastered to his yellow skull that the two presented somewhat the effect of a ploughed field ; his little green eyes, sharp as gimlets, glittered under lids whose pale red edges took the place of lashes. Care had furrowed his brow with as many horizontal lines as there were folds in his coat. The pallid face bespoke patience, commercial wisdom, and a species of sly cupidity acquired in business.

At the period of which we write it was less rare than it is now to meet with old commercial families who preserved as precious traditions the manners, customs, and characteristics of their particular callings ; and who remained, in the midst of the new civilization, as antediluvian as the fossils discovered by Cuvier in the quarries. The head of the Guillaume family was one of these noteworthy guardians of old customs ; he even regretted the provost-marshal of merchants, and never spoke of a decision in the court of commerce without calling it “ the sentence of the consuls.” Having risen, in accordance with these customs, the earliest in the house, he was now awaiting with a determined air the arrival of his three clerks, intending to scold them if a trifle late. Those heedless disciples of Mercury knew nothing more appalling than the silent observation with which the master scrutinized their faces and their movements of a Monday morning, searching for proofs or traces of their

frolies. But, strange to say, just as they appeared, the old draper paid no attention to his apprentices; he was engaged in finding a motive for the evident interest with which the young man in silk stockings and a cloak turned his eyes alternately on the pictured sign and then into the depths of the shop. The daylight, now increasing, showed the counting-room behind an iron railing covered by curtains of faded green silk, where Monsieur Guillaume kept his huge books, the mute oracles of his business. The too inquisitive stranger seemed to have an eye on them, and also to be scrutinizing the adjoining dining-room, where the family, when assembled for a meal, could see whatever happened at the entrance of the shop. So great an interest in his private premises seemed suspicious to the old merchant, who had lived under the law of the *maximum*. Consequently, Monsieur Guillaume supposed, not unnaturally, that the doubtful stranger had designs upon his strong-box.

The elder of the clerks, after discreetly enjoying the silent duel which was taking place between his master and the stranger, ventured to come out upon the step where stood Monsieur Guillaume, and there he observed that the young man was glancing furtively at the third-floor windows. The clerk made three steps into the street, looked up, and fancied he caught sight of Mademoiselle Augustine Guillaume hastily retiring. Dis-

pleased with this show of perspicacity on the part of his head-clerk, the draper looked askance at his subordinate. Then suddenly the mutual anxieties excited in the souls of lover and merchant were allayed, — the stranger hailed a passing hackney coach, and jumped into it with a deceitful air of indifference. His departure shed a sort of balm into the souls of the other clerks, who were somewhat uneasy at the presence of their victim.

“ Well, gentlemen, what are you about, standing there with your arms crossed ? ” said Monsieur Guillaume to his three neophytes. “ In my day, good faith, when I was under the *Sieur Chevrel*, I had examined two pieces of cloth before this time of day ! ”

“ Then it must have been daylight earlier, ” said the second clerk, whose duty it was to examine the rolls.

The old dealer could not help smiling. Though two of the three clerks, consigned to his care by their fathers, rich manufacturers at *Louviers* and *Sedan*, had only to ask on the day they came of age for a hundred thousand francs, to have them, Guillaume believed it to be his duty to keep them under the iron rod of an old-fashioned despotism, wholly unknown in these days in our brilliant modern shops, where the clerks expect to be rich men at thirty, — he made them work like negro slaves. His three clerks did as much as would have tired out ten of the modern *sybarites* whose laziness

swells the columns of a budget. No sound ever broke the stillness of that solemn establishment, where all hinges were oiled, and the smallest article of furniture was kept with a virtuous nicety which showed severe economy and the strictest order. Sometimes the giddiest of the three clerks ventured to scratch upon the rind of the Gruyère cheese, which was delivered to them at breakfast and scrupulously respected by them, the date of its first delivery. This prank, and a few others of a like kind, would occasionally bring a smile to the lips of Guillaume's youngest daughter, the pretty maiden who had just passed like a vision before the eyes of the enchanted watcher.

Though each of the apprentices paid a large sum for his board, not one of them would have dared to remain at table until the dessert was served. When Madame Guillaume made ready to mix the salad, the poor young fellows trembled to think with what parsimony that prudent hand would pour the oil. They were not allowed to pass a night off the premises without giving long notice and plausible reasons for the irregularity. Every Sunday two clerks, taking the honor by turns, accompanied the Guillaume family to mass and to vespers. Mesdemoiselles Virginie and Augustine, Guillaume's two daughters, modestly attired in printed cotton gowns, each took the arm of a clerk and walked in front, beneath the piercing eyes of their mother, who brought

up the domestic procession with her husband, compelled by her to carry two large prayer-books bound in black morocco. The second clerk received no salary ; as to the elder, whom twelve years of perseverance and discretion had initiated into the secrets of the establishment, he received twelve hundred francs a year in return for his services. On certain family fête-days a few gifts were bestowed upon him, the sole value of which lay in the labor of Madame Guillaume's lean and wrinkled hands, — knitted purses, which she took care to stuff with cotton wool to show their patterns, braces of the strongest construction, or silk stockings of the heaviest make. Sometimes, but rarely, this prime minister was allowed to share the enjoyments of the family when they spent a day in the country or, after months of deliberation, they decided to hire a box at the theatre, and use their right to demand some play of which Paris had long been weary.

As to the other clerks, the barrier of respect which formerly separated a master draper from his apprentices was so firmly fixed between them and the old merchant that they would have feared less to steal a piece of cloth than to break through that august etiquette. This deference may seem preposterous in our day, but these old houses were schools of commercial honesty and dignity. The masters adopted the apprentices ; their linen was cared for, mended, and often re-

newed by the mistress of the house. If a clerk fell ill the attention he received was truly maternal ; in case of danger the master spared no money and called in the best doctors, for he held himself answerable to the parents of these young men for their health as well as for their morals and their business training. If one of them, honorable by nature, was overtaken by some disaster, these old merchants knew how to appreciate the real intelligence such a youth had displayed, and often did not hesitate to trust the happiness of a daughter to one to whom they had already confided the care of their business. Guillaume was one of these old-fashioned business men ; if he had their absurdities, he had also their fine qualities. Thus it was that Joseph Lebas, his head-clerk, an orphan without property, was, to his mind, a suitable husband for Virginie, his eldest daughter. But Joseph did not share these cut-and-dried opinions of his master, who, for an empire, would not have married his youngest daughter before the elder. The unfortunate clerk felt that his heart was given to Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger sister. To explain this passion, which had grown up secretly, we must look further into the system of autocratic government which ruled the house and home of the old merchant draper.

Guillaume had two daughters. The eldest, Mademoiselle Virginie, was a reproduction of her mother. Madame Guillaume, daughter of the Sieur Chevrel, sat

so firmly upright behind her counter that she had more than once overheard bets as to her being impaled there. Her long, thin face expressed a sanctimonious piety. Madame Guillaume, devoid of all grace and without amiability of manner, covered her sexagenary head with a bonnet of invariable shape trimmed with long lappets like those of a widow. The whole neighborhood called her "the nun." Her words were few; her gestures sudden and jerky, like the action of a telegraph. Her eyes, clear as those of a cat, seemed to dislike the whole world because she herself was ugly. Mademoiselle Virginie, brought up, like her younger sister, under the domestic rule of her mother, was now twenty-eight years of age. Youth softened the ill-favored, awkward air which her resemblance to her mother gave at times to her appearance; but maternal severity had bestowed upon her two great qualities which counterbalanced the rest of her inheritance, — she was gentle and patient. Mademoiselle Augustine, now scarcely eighteen years old, was like neither father nor mother. She was one of those girls who, by the absence of all physical ties to their parents, seem to justify the saying of prudes, "God sends the children." Augustine was small, or, to give a better idea of her, delicate. Graceful and full of simplicity and candor, a man of the world could have found no fault with the charming creature except that her gestures were unmeaning and her attitudes occasion-

ally common, or even awkward. Her silent and quiescent face expressed the fleeting melancholy which fastens upon all young girls who are too feeble to dare resist the will of a domineering mother.

Always modestly dressed, the two sisters had no way of satisfying the innate coquetry of their woman's nature except by a luxury of cleanliness and neatness which became them wonderfully, and put them in keeping with the shining counters and shelves on which the old servant allowed not a speck of dust to settle,—in keeping, too, with the antique simplicity of everything about them. Forced by such a life to find the elements of happiness in regular occupation, Augustine and Virginie had up to this time given nothing but satisfaction to their mother, who secretly congratulated herself on the perfect characters of her two daughters. It is easy to imagine the results of such an education as they had received. Brought up in the midst of business, accustomed to hear arguments and calculations that were grievously mercantile, taught grammar, book-keeping, a little Jewish history, a little French history in La Ragois, and allowed to read no books but those their mother sanctioned, it is unnecessary to say that their ideas were limited; but they knew how to manage a household admirably; they understood the value and the cost of things; they appreciated the difficulties in the way of amassing money; they were economical and

full of respect for the faculties and qualities of men of business. In spite of their father's wealth, they were as clever at darning as they were at embroidery; their mother talked of teaching them to cook, so that they might know how to order a dinner and scold the cook from actual experience.

These girls, who were ignorant of the pleasures of the world and saw only the peaceful current of their parents' exemplary lives, seldom cast their youthful eyes beyond the precincts of that old patrimonial house, which to their mother was the universe. The parties occasioned by certain family solemnities formed the whole horizon of their terrestrial joys. When the large salon on the second floor was thrown open to receive guests, — such as Madame Roguin, formerly Mademoiselle Chevrel, fifteen years younger than her cousin, and who wore diamonds; young Rabourdin, head-clerk at the ministry of Finance; Monsieur Cæsar Birotteau, the rich perfumer, and his wife, called Madame Cæsar; Monsieur Camusot, the richest silk merchant in the rue des Bourdonnais; his father-in-law, Monsieur Cardot; two or three old bankers, and certain irreproachable women, — then the preparations in getting out the silver plate, the Dresden china, the wax candles, the choice glass, all carefully packed away, were a diversion to the monotonous lives of the three women, who went and came, with as many steps and as much fuss as though they

were nuns preparing for the reception of their bishop. Then, at night, when all three were tired out with the exertion of wiping, rubbing, unpacking, and putting in their places the ornaments of these festivals, and the young girls were helping their mother to go to bed, Madame Guillaume would say, "My dears, we have really accomplished nothing."

If, at these solemn assemblies, the pious creature allowed a little dancing, and kept the whist and the boston and the tric-trac players to the confines of her own bedroom, the concession was accepted as an un-hoped-for felicity, and gave as much happiness as the two or three public balls to which Guillaume took his daughters during the carnival. Once a year the worthy draper himself gave an entertainment on which he spared no expense. However rich and elegant the invited guests might be, they took care not to miss that fête; for the most important business houses in the city often had recourse to the vast credit, or the wealth, or the great experience of Monsieur Guillaume. The two daughters of the worthy merchant did not, however, profit as much as might be thought from the instructions which society offers to young minds. They wore at these entertainments (bills of exchange, as it were, upon futurity) wreaths and ornaments of so common a kind as to make them blush. Their style of dancing was not of the best, and maternal vigilance allowed them to say

only "Yes" or "No" to their partners. Then the invariable domestic rule of the Cat-playing-ball obliged them to retire at eleven o'clock, just as the party was getting animated. So their pleasures, apparently conformable with their father's wealth, were really dull and insipid through circumstances derived from the habits and principles of their family.

As to their daily life, a single fact will suffice to paint it. Madame Guilanme required her daughters to dress for the day in the early morning, to come downstairs at precisely the same hour, and to arrange their occupations with monastic regularity. Yet, with all this, chance had bestowed upon Augustine a soul that was able to feel the void of such an existence. Sometimes those blue eyes were lifted for a moment as if to question the dark depths of the stairway or the damp shop. Listening to the eloistral silence her ears seemed to hear from afar confused revelations of the passionate life, which counts emotions as of more value than things. At such moments the girl's face glowed; her idle hands let fall the muslin on the polished oaken counter; but soon the mother's voice would say, in tones that were always sharp, even when she intended them to be gentle, "Augustine, my dear, what are you thinking about?"

Perhaps "Hippolyte, Earl of Douglas," and the "Comte de Comminges," two novels which Augustine

had found in the closet of a cook dismissed by Madame Guillaume, may have contributed to develop the ideas of the young girl, who had stealthily devoured those productions during the long nights of the preceding winter. The unconscious expression of vague desire, the soft voice, the jasmine skin, and the blue eyes of Augustine Guillaume had lighted a flame in the soul of poor Lebas as violent as it was humble. By a caprice that is easy enough to understand, Augustine felt no inclination for Joseph; perhaps because she did not know he loved her. On the other hand, the long legs and chestnut hair, the strong hands and vigorous frame of the head-clerk excited the admiration of Mademoiselle Virginie, who had not yet been asked in marriage in spite of a dowry of a hundred and fifty thousand francs. What could be more natural than these inversed loves, born in the silence of that shop like violets in the depths of the woods? The mute contemplation which constantly drew the eyes of these young people together, through their violent need of some relief from the monotonous toil and the religious calm in which they lived, could not fail to excite, sooner or later, the emotions of love. The habit of looking into the face of another leads to an understanding of the noble qualities of the soul, and ends by obliterating all defects.

“At the rate that man carries things,” thought Monsieur Guillaume when he read Napoleon’s first decree on

the classes for conscription, "our daughters will have to go upon their knees for husbands."

It was about that time that the old merchant, noticing that his eldest daughter was beginning to fade, be-thought him that he himself had married Mademoiselle Chevrel under very much the same circumstances as those in which Virginie and Joseph Lebas stood to each other. What a fine thing it would be to marry his daughter and pay a sacred debt by returning to the orphaned young man the same benefaction that he himself had received from his predecessor in a like situa-tion? Joseph Lebas, who was thirty-three years of age, was fully conscious of the obstacles that a differ-ence of fifteen years in their ages placed between Au-gustine and himself. Too shrewd and intelligent not to fathom Monsierr Guillaume's intentions, he understood his master's inexorable principles far too well to sup-pose for a moment that the younger daughter could be married before the elder. The poor clerk, whose heart was as good as his legs were long and his shoulders high, suffered in silence.

Such was the state of things in this little republic of the rue Saint-Denis, which seemed in many ways like an annex to La Trappe. But to explain external events as we have now explained inward feelings, it is neces-sary to look back a few months before the little scene which began this history.

One evening at dusk a young man, happening to pass before the shop of the Cat-playing-ball, stopped to look at a scene within those precincts which all the painters of the world would have paused to contemplate. The shop, which was not yet lighted up, formed a dark vista through which the merchant's dining-room was seen. An astral lamp on the dinner-table shed that yellow light which gives such charm to the Dutch pictures. The white table-linen, the silver, the glass, were brilliant accessories, still further thrown into relief by the sharp contrasts of light and shadow. The figures of the father of the family and his wife, the faces of the clerks, and the pure lines of Augustine, near to whom stood a stont, chubby servant-girl, composed so remarkable a picture, the heads were so original, the expression of each character was so frank, it was so easy to imagine the peace, the silence, the modest life of the family, that to an artist accustomed to express nature there was something absolutely commanding in the desire to paint this accidental scene.

The pedestrian, thus arrested, was a young painter who, seven years earlier, had carried off the *prix de Rome*. He had lately returned from the Eternal City. His soul, fed on poesy, his eyes surfeited with Raffaele and Michael-Angelo, were now athirst for simple nature after his long sojourn in the mighty land where art has reached its highest grandeur. True or false, such was

his personal feeling. Carried away for years by the fire of Italian passions, his heart now sought a calm and modest virgin, known to him as yet only upon canvas. The first enthusiasm of his soul at the simple picture before his eyes passed naturally into a deep admiration for the principal figure. Augustine seemed thoughtful, and was eating nothing. By a chance arrangement of the lamp, the light fell full upon her face, and her bust appeared to move in a circle of flame, which threw into still brighter relief the outline of her head, illuminating it in a way that seemed half supernatural. The artist compared her involuntarily to an exiled angel remembering heaven. A mysterious feeling, almost unknown to him, a love limpid and bubbling overflowed his heart. After standing a moment as if paralyzed beneath the weight of these ideas, he tore himself away from his happiness and went home, unable either to eat or sleep.

The next day he entered his studio, and did not leave it again until he had placed on canvas the magic charm of a scene the mere recollection of which had, as it were, laid a spell upon him. But his happiness was incomplete so long as he did not possess a faithful portrait of his idol. Many a time he passed before the house of the Cat-playing-balk; he even entered the shop once or twice on some pretext to get a nearer view of the ravishing creature who was always covered by Madame

Guillaume's wing. For eight whole months, given up to his love and to his brushes, he was invisible to his friends, even to his intimates; he forgot all, — poetry, the theatre, music, and his most cherished habits.

One morning Girodet the painter forced his way in, eluding all barriers as only artists can, and woke him up with the inquiry, "What are you going to send to the Salon?"

The artist seized his friend's arm, led him to the studio, uncovered a little easel picture, and also a portrait. After a slow and eager examination of the two masterpieces, Girodet threw his arms around his friend and kissed him, without finding words to speak. His feelings could only be uttered as he felt them, — soul to soul.

"You love her!" he said at last.

Both knew that the noblest portraits of Titian, Raffaele, and Leonardo da Vinci are due to exalted human feelings, which, under so many diverse conditions, have given birth to the masterpieces of art. For all answer the young painter bowed his head.

"How fortunate, how happy you are to be able to love here, in Paris, after leaving Italy. I can't advise you to send such works as those to the Salon," added the distinguished painter. "You see, such pictures cannot be felt there. Those absolutely true colors, that stupendous labor, will not be understood; the

public is no longer able to see into such depths. The pictures we paint now-a-days, dear friend, are mere screens for decoration. Better make verses, say I, and translate the ancients, — we shall get a truer fame that way than our miserable pictures will ever bring us.”

But in spite of this friendly advice the two pictures were exhibited. That of the interior made almost a revolution in art. It gave birth to the fashion of *genre* pictures which since that time have so filled our exhibitions that one might almost believe they were produced by some mechanical process. As to the portrait, there are few living artists who do not cherish the memory of that breathing canvas on which the general public, occasionally just in its judgment, left the crown of praise which Girodet himself placed there.

The two pictures were surrounded by crowds. People killed themselves, as women say, to look at them. Speculators and great lords would have covered both canvases with double-napoleons, but the artist obstinately refused to sell them, declining also to make copies. He was offered an immense sum if he would allow them to be engraved; but the dealers were no more successful than the amateurs. Though this affair engrossed the social world, it was not of a nature to penetrate the depths of Egyptian solitude in the rue Saint-Denis. It so chanced, however, that the wife of a notary, paying

a visit to Madame Guillaume, spoke of the exhibition before Augustine, of whom she was very fond, and explained what it was. Madame Roguin's chatter naturally inspired Augustine with a desire to see the pictures, and with the boldness to secretly ask her cousin to take her to the Louvre. Madame Roguin succeeded in the negotiation she undertook with Madame Guillaume, and was allowed to take her little cousin from her daily tasks for the short space of two hours.

Thus it was that the young girl, passing through the crowd, stood before the famous picture. A quiver made her tremble like a birch-leaf when she recognized her own self. She was frightened, and looked about to rejoin Madame Roguin, from whom the crowd had parted her. At that instant her eyes encountered the flushed face of the young painter. She suddenly remembered a man who had frequently passed the shop and whom she had often remarked, thinking he was some new neighbor.

“You see there the inspiration of love,” said the artist in a whisper to the timid creature, who was terrified by his words.

She summoned an almost supernatural courage to force her way through the crowd and rejoin her cousin.

“You will be suffocated,” cried Augustine. “Do let us go!”

But there are certain moments at the Salon when two women are not able to move freely through the galleries. Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin were blocked and pushed by the swaying crowd to within a few feet of the second picture. The exclamation of surprise uttered by Madame Roguin was lost in the noises of the room; but Augustine involuntarily wept as she looked at the marvellous scene. Then, with a feeling that is almost inexplicable, she put her finger on her lips as she saw the ecstatic face of the young artist within two feet of her. He replied with a motion of his head toward Madame Roguin, as if to show Augustine that he understood her. This pantomime threw a fire of burning coals into the being of the poor girl, who felt she was criminal in thus allowing a secret compact between herself and the unknown artist. The stifling heat, the sight of the brilliant dresses, a giddiness which the wonderful combinations of color produced in her, the multitude of figures, living and painted, which surrounded her, the profusion of gold frames, — all gave her a sense of intoxication which redoubled her terrors. She might have fainted if there had not welled up from the depths of her heart, in spite of this chaos of sensations, a mysterious joy which vivified her whole being. Still, she fancied she was under the dominion of that demon whose dreadful snares were threats held out to her by the thundered words of the preach-

ers. The moment seemed like one of actual madness to her. She saw she was accompanied to her cousin's carriage by the mysterious young man, resplendent with love and happiness. A new and unknown excitement possessed her, an intoxication which delivered her, as it were, into the hands of Nature; she listened to the eloquent voice of her own heart, and looked at the young painter several times, betraying as she did so the agitation of her thoughts. Never had the carnation of her cheeks formed a more charming contrast to the whiteness of her skin. The artist then beheld that beauty in its perfect flower, that virgin modesty in all its glory.

Augustine became conscious of a sort of joy mingling with her terror as she thought how her presence had brought happiness to one whose name was on every lip and whose talent had given immortality to a passing scene. Yes, she was beloved! she could not doubt it! When she ceased to see him, his words still sounded in her ear. "You see the inspiration of love!" The palpitations of her heart were painful, so violently did the now ardent blood awaken unknown forces in her being. She complained of a severe headache to avoid replying to her cousin's questions about the pictures; but when they reached home, Madame Roguin could not refrain from telling Madame Guillaume of the celebrity given to the establishment of the Cat-playing-ball, and Augus-

tine trembled in every limb as she heard her mother say she should go to the Salon and see her own house. Again the young girl complained of her headache, and received permission to go to bed.

“That’s what you get by going to shows!” exclaimed Monsieur Guillaume. “Headaches! Is it so very amusing to see a picture of what you see every day in the street? Don’t talk to me of artists; they are like authors, — half-starved beggars. Why the devil should that fellow choose my house to villify in his picture?”

“Perhaps it will help to sell some of our cloth,” said Joseph Lebas.

That remark did not save art and literature from being once more arraigned and condemned before the tribunal of commerce. It will be readily believed that such discourse brought little encouragement to Augustine, who gave herself up in the night-time to the first revery of love. The events of the day were like those of a dream which she delighted to reproduce in thought. She learned the fears, the hopes, the remorse, all those undulations of feeling which rock a heart as simple and timid as hers. What a void she felt within that gloomy house, what a treasure she found within her soul! To be the wife of a man of talent, to share his fame! Imagine the havoc such a thought would make in the heart of a child brought up in the bosom of such a fam-

ily! What hopes would it not awaken in a girl who lived among the vulgarities of life, and yet longed for its elegancies. A beam of light had come into her prison. Augustine loved, loved suddenly. So many repressed feelings were gratified that she succumbed at once, without an instant's reflection. At eighteen love flings its prism between the world and the eyes of a maiden. Incapable of imagining the harsh experience which comes to every loving woman married to a man gifted with imagination, she fancied herself called to make the happiness of such a man, seeing no disparity between them. For her the present was the whole future.

When Monsieur and Madame Guillaume returned the next day from the Salon, their faces announced disappointment and annoyance. In the first place, the artist had withdrawn the picture; in the next, Madame Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. The news that the pictures had been withdrawn after her visit to the Salon was to Augustine the revelation of a delicacy of sentiment which all women appreciate, if only instinctively.

The morning on which, returning from a ball, Théodore de Sommervieux (such was the name which celebrity had now placed in Augustine's heart), was showered with soapy water by the clerks of the Cat-playing-ball, as he awaited the apparition of his innocent beauty, — who certainly did not know he was

there, — was only the fourth occasion of their seeing each other since that first meeting at the Salon. The obstacles which the iron system of the house of Guillaume placed in the way of the ardent and impetuous nature of the artist, added a violence to his passion for Augustine, which will be readily understood. How approach a young girl seated behind a counter between two such women as Mademoiselle Virginie and Madame Guillaume? How was it possible to correspond with her if her mother never left her? Ready, like all lovers, to invent troubles for himself, Théodore selected a rival among the clerks, and suspected the others of being in their comrade's interests. If he escaped their Argus eyes he felt he should succumb to the stern glances of the old merchant or Madame Guillaume. Obstacles on all sides, despair on all sides! The very violence of his passion prevented the young man from inventing those clever expedients which, in lovers as well as in prisoners, seem to be crowning efforts of intellect roused either by a savage desire for liberty or by the ardor of love. Then Théodore would rush round the corner like a madman, as if movement alone could suggest a way out of the difficulty.

After allowing his imagination to torment him for weeks, it came into his head to bribe the chubby servant-girl. A few letters were thus exchanged during the fortnight which followed the unlucky morning when

Monsieur Guillaume and Théodore had first met. The loving pair had now agreed to see each other daily at a certain hour, and on Sunday at the church of Saint-Leu, during both mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her dear Théodore a list of the friends and relatives of the family to whom the young painter was to gain access. He was then to endeavor to interest in his loving cause some one of those money-making and commercial souls to whom a real passion would otherwise seem a monstrous and unheard-of speculation.

In other respects nothing happened and no change took place in the habits of the Cat-playing-ball. If Augustine was absent-minded; if, against every law of the domestic charter, she went up to her bedroom to make the signals under cover of the flower-pots; if she sighed, if she brooded, — no one, not even her mother, found it out. This may cause some surprise to those who have understood the spirit of the household, where a single idea tinged with poetry would have contrasted sharply with the beings and with the things therein contained, and where no one was able to give a look or gesture that was not seen and analyzed. And yet, as it happened, nothing was really more natural. The tranquil vessel which navigated the seas of Parisian commerce under the flag of the Cat-playing-ball, was at this particular moment tossed about in one of those

storms which may be called equinoctial, on account of their periodical return.

For the last fifteen days the five men of the establishment, with Madame Guillaume and Mademoiselle Virginie, had devoted themselves to that severe toil which goes by the name of "taking an inventory." All bales were undone, and the length of each piece of goods was measured, to learn the exact value of what remained on hand. The card attached to each piece was carefully examined to know how long the different goods had been in stock. New prices were affixed. Monsieur Guillaume, always standing up, yard-measure in hand, his pen behind his ear, was like a captain in command of a ship. His sharp voice, passing down a hatchway to the ware-rooms below, rang out that barbarous jargon of commerce expressed in enigmas: "How many H-N-Z?" "Take it away!" "How much left of Q-X?" "Two yards." "What price?" "Five-five-three." "Put at three A all J-J, all M-P, and the rest of V-D-O." A thousand other such phrases, all equally intelligible, resounded across the counters, like those verses of modern poetry which the romanticists recite to each other to keep up their enthusiasm for a favorite poet. At night Monsieur Guillaume locked himself and his head-clerk and his wife into the counting-room, went over the books, opened the new accounts, notified the dilatory debtors, and made out all bills.

The results of this immense toil, which could be noted down on one sheet of foolscap paper, proved to the house of Guillaume that it owned so much in money, so much in merchandise, so much in notes and cheques; also that it did not owe a sou, but that so many hundred thousand francs were owing to it; that its capital had increased; that its farms, houses, and stocks were to be enlarged, repaired, or doubled. Hence came a sense of the necessity of beginning once more with renewed ardor the accumulation of more money; though none of these brave ants ever thought of asking themselves, "What's the good of it?"

Thanks to this annual tumult, the happy Augustine was able to escape the observation of her Arguses. At last, one Saturday evening, the "taking of the inventory" was an accomplished fact. The figures of the total assets showed so many ciphers that in honor of the occasion Monsieur Guillaume removed the stern embargo which reigned throughout the year at dessert. The sly old draper rubbed his hands and told the clerks they might remain at table. They had hardly swallowed their little glass of a certain home-made liqueur, however, when carriage-wheels were heard in the street. The family were going to the Variétés to see "Cinderella," while the two younger clerks each received six francs and permission to go where they liked, provided they were at home by midnight.

The next morning, in spite of this debauch, the old merchant-draper shaved at six o'clock, put on his fine maroon coat, — the lustre of its cloth causing him, as usual, much satisfaction, — fastened his gold buckles to the knee-band of his ample silk breeches, and then, toward seven o'clock, while every one in the house was still asleep, he went to the little office adjoining the shop on the first floor. It was lighted by a window protected by thick iron bars, and looked out upon a little square court formed by walls so black that the place was like a well. The old merchant opened an inner blind that was clamped with iron, and raised a sash of the window. The chill air of the court cooled the hot atmosphere of the office, which exhaled an odor peculiar to all such places. Monsieur Guillaume remained standing, one hand resting on the greasy arm of a cane-chair covered with morocco, the primitive color of which was now effaced; he seemed to hesitate to sit down. The old man glanced with a softened air at the tall double desk, where his wife's seat was arranged exactly opposite to his own, in a little arched alcove made in the wall. He looked at the numbered paper-boxes, the twine, the various utensils, the irons with which they marked the cloth, the safe, — all objects of immemorial origin, — and he fancied himself standing before the evoked shade of the late Chevrel. He pulled out the very stool on which he formerly sat in presence of his now defunct

master. That stool, covered with black leather, from which the horsehair had long oozed at the corners (but without falling out), he now placed with a trembling hand on the particular spot where his predecessor had once placed it; then, with an agitation difficult to describe, he pulled a bell which rang at the bed's head of Joseph Lebas. When that decisive deed was done, the old man, to whom these memories may have been oppressive, took out three or four bills of exchange which had been presented to him the day before, and was looking them over, but without seeing them, when Joseph Lebas entered the office.

"Sit there," said Monsieur Guillaume, pointing to the stool.

As the old master-drafter had never before allowed a clerk to sit in his presence, Joseph trembled.

"What do you think of these drafts?" asked Guillaume.

"They will not be paid."

"Why not?"

"I heard yesterday that Étienne and Company were making their payments in gold."

"Ho! ho!" cried the drafter. "They must be very ill to show their bile. Let us talk of something else, Joseph; the inventory is finished?"

"Yes, monsieur, and the dividend is the finest you have ever had."

“Pray don’t use those new-fangled words. Say ‘proceeds,’ Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that we owe that result partly to you? Therefore, I do not wish you to have a salary any longer. Madame Guillaume has put it into my head to offer you a share in the business. Hey, Joseph, what do you say? ‘Guillaume and Lebas,’ — don’t the names make a fine partnership? and we can add ‘and Company’ to complete the signature.”

Tears came into Joseph’s eyes, though he tried to hide them. “Ah, Monsieur Guillaume,” he said, “how have I deserved such goodness? I have only done my duty. It was enough that you should even take an interest in a poor orph — ”

He brushed the cuff of his left sleeve with his right sleeve, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this modest young fellow no doubt needed, as he himself once needed, to be helped and encouraged to make the explanation complete.

“It is true, Joseph,” said Virginie’s father, “that you do not quite deserve that favor. You do not put as much confidence in me as I do in you” (here the clerk looked up hurriedly). “You know my secrets. For the last two years I have told you all about the business. I have sent you travelling to the manufactories. I have nothing to reproach myself with as to you. But you! You have a liking in your mind, and

you have never said a word to me about it" (Joseph colored). "Ha! ha!" cried Guillaume, "so you thought you could deceive an old fox like me? Me! when you knew how I predicted the Lecocq failure!"

"Oh, monsieur!" replied Joseph Lebas, examining his master as attentively as his master examined him, "is it possible that you know whom I love?"

"I know all, you good-for-nothing fellow," said the worthy and astute old dealer, twisting the lobe of the young man's ear; "and I forgive it, for I did as much myself."

"Will you give her to me?"

"Yes, with a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and I will leave you as much more; and we will meet our new expenses under the new firm name. Yes, boy, we will stir up the business finely and put new life into it," cried the old merchant, rising and gesticulating with his arms. "There is nothing like business, son-in-law. Those who sneer and ask what pleasures can be found in it are simply fools. To have the cue of money-matters, to know how to govern the market, to wait with the anxiety of gamblers till Étienne and Company fail, to see a regiment of Guards go by with our cloth on their backs, to trip up a neighbor, — honestly, of course, — to manufacture at a lower price than others, to follow up an affair when we've planned it, to watch it begin, increase, totter, and succeed, to under-

stand, like the minister of police, all the ways and means of all the commercial houses so as to make no false step, to stand up straight when others are wrecked and ruined, to have friends and correspondents in all the manufacturing towns and cities — Ha, Joseph! is n't that perpetual pleasure? I call that living! Yes, and I shall die in that bustle like old Chevrel himself."

In the heat of his allocution Père Guillaume scarcely looked at his clerk, who was weeping hot tears; when he did so he exclaimed, "Hey, Joseph, my poor boy, what is the matter?"

"Ah! I love her so, Monsieur Guillaume, that my heart fails me, I believe."

"Well, my boy," said the old man, quite moved, "you are happier than you think you are; for, by the powers, she loves you. I know it; yes, I do!"

And he winked his two little green eyes as he looked at Joseph.

"Mademoiselle Augustine! Mademoiselle Augustine!" cried Joseph Lebas in his excitement. He was about to rush out of the office when he felt himself grasped by an iron arm, and his astonished master pulled him vigorously in front of him.

"What has Augustine got to do with it?" asked Guillaume, in a voice that froze the unfortunate young man.

"It is she — whom — I love," stammered the clerk.

Disconcerted at his own lack of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down and put his pointed head into his two hands to reflect upon the queer position in which he found himself. Joseph Lebas, ashamed, mortified, and despairing, stood before him.

“Joseph,” said the merchant, with cold dignity, “I was speaking to you of Virginie. Love is not to be commanded; I know that. I trust your discretion; we will forget the whole matter. I shall never allow Augustine to be married before Virginie. Your interest in the business will be ten per cent.”

The head-clerk, in whom love inspired a mysterious degree of courage and eloquence, clasped his hands, opened his lips, and spoke to Guillaume for fifteen minutes with such ardor and deep feeling that the situation changed. If the matter had concerned some business affair the old man would have had a fixed rule by which to settle it; but suddenly cast upon the sea of feelings, a thousand miles from business and without a compass, he floated irresolutely before the wind of an event so “out of the way,” as he kept saying to himself. Influenced by his natural paternal kindness, he was at the mercy of the waves.

“Hey, the deuce, Joseph, you know of course that my two children came with ten years between them. Mademoiselle Chevrel was not handsome, no; but I never gave her any reason to complain of me. Do as

I did. Come, don't fret, — what a goose you are! Perhaps we can manage it; I'll try. There's always some way to do a thing. We men are not exactly Celadons to our wives, — you understand, don't you? Madame Guillaume is pious, and — There, there, my boy, you may give Augustine your arm this morning when we go to mass."

Such were the sentences which Père Guillaume scattered at random. The last of them filled the lover's soul with joy. He was already thinking of a friend who would do for Mademoiselle Virginie as he left the smoky office, after pressing the hand of his future father-in-law and saying, in a confidential way, that it would all come right.

"What will Madame Guillaume say?" That idea was terribly harrassing to the worthy merchant when he found himself alone.

At breakfast, Madame Guillaume and Virginie, whom the draper had left, provisionally, in ignorance of her disappointment, looked at Joseph with so much meaning that he became greatly embarrassed. His modesty won him the good-will of his future mother-in-law. The matron grew so lively that she looked at Monsieur Guillaume with a smile, and allowed herself a few little harmless pleasantries customary from time immemorial in such innocent families. She discussed the relative heights of Joseph and Virginie, and placed them side

by side to be measured. These little follies brought a cloud to the paternal brow ; in fact, the head of the family manifested such a sense of decorum that he ordered Augustine to take the arm of his head-clerk on their way to church. Madame Guillaume, surprised at so much masculine delicacy, honored her husband's act with an approving nod. The procession left the house in an order that suggested no gossiping constructions to the neighbors.

“Do you not think, Mademoiselle Augustine,” said the head-clerk in a trembling voice, “that the wife of a merchant in high standing, like Monsieur Guillaume for example, ought to amuse herself rather more than — than your mother amuses herself? She ought surely to wear diamonds, and have a carriage. As for me, if I should ever marry I should want to take all the cares myself, and see my wife happy ; I should not let her sit at any counter of mine. You see, women are no longer as much needed as they used to be in draper's shops. Monsieur Guillaume was quite right to do as he did, and besides, Madame likes it. But if a wife knows how to help in making up the accounts at times, and looking over the correspondence ; if she can have an eye to a few details and to the orders, and manage her household, so as not to be idle, that's enough. As for me, I should always wish to amuse her after seven o'clock, when the shop is closed. I should take her to the theatre and

the picture galleries, and into society, — but you are not listening to me.”

“Oh, yes I am, Monsieur Joseph. What were you saying about painters? It is a noble art.”

“Yes, I know one, a master painter, Monsieur Lourdois; he makes money.”

Thus conversing, the family reached Saint-Leu; there, Madame Guillaume recovered her rights. She made Augustine, for the first time, sit beside her; and Virginie took the fourth chair, next to that of Lebas. During the sermon all went well with Augustine and with Théodore, who stood behind a column and prayed to his madonna with great fervor; but when the Host was raised, Madame Guillaume perceived, somewhat tardily, that her daughter Augustine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She was about to scold her vigorously when, suddenly raising her veil, she postponed her lecture and looked in the direction which her daughter's eyes had taken. With the help of her spectacles, she then and there beheld the young artist, whose fashionable clothes bespoke an officer of the army on furlough rather than a merchant belonging to the neighborhood. It is difficult to imagine the wrath of Madame Guillaume, who flattered herself she had brought up her daughters in perfect propriety, on detecting this clandestine love in Augustine's heart, the evils of which she magnified out of ignorance and prudery. She

concluded instantly that her daughter was rotten to the core.

“In the first place, hold your book straight, mademoiselle,” she said in a low voice, but trembling with anger; then she snatched the tell-tale prayer-book, and turned it the right way. “Don’t dare to raise your eyes off those prayers,” she added; “otherwise you will answer for it to me. After service, your father and I will have something to say to you.”

These words were like a thunderbolt to poor Augustine. She felt like fainting; but between the misery she endured and the fear of creating a disturbance in church, she gathered enough courage to hide her suffering. Yet it was easy enough to guess the commotion of her mind by the way the book shook in her hands and by the tears which fell on the pages as she turned them. The artist saw, from the incensed look which Madame Guillaume flung at him, the perils which threatened his love, and he left the church with rage in his heart, determined to dare all.

“Go to your room, mademoiselle!” said Madame Guillaume when they reached home. “Don’t dare to leave it; you will be called when we want you.”

The conference of husband and wife was held in secret, and at first nothing transpired. But after a while Virginie, who had comforted her sister with many tender suggestions, carried her kindness so far

as to slip down to the door of her mother's bedroom, where the discussion was taking place, hoping to overhear a few sentences. At her first trip from the third to the second floor she heard her father exclaim, "Madame, do you wish to kill your daughter?"

"My poor dear," said Virginie, running back to her disconsolate sister, "papa is defending you!"

"What will they do to Théodore?" asked the innocent little thing.

Virginie went down again; but this time she stayed longer; she heard that Lebas loved Augustine.

It was decreed that on this memorable day that usually calm house should become a hell. Monsieur Guillaume brought Joseph Lebas to the verge of despair by informing him of Augustine's attachment to the artist. Lebas, who by that time had met his friend and advised him to ask for Mademoiselle Virginie in marriage, saw all his hopes overthrown. Virginie, overcome by the discovery that Joseph had, as it were, refused her, was taken with a violent headache. And finally, the jar between husband and wife, resulting from the explanation they had together, when for the third time only in their lives they held different opinions, made itself felt in a really dreadful manner. At last, about four o'clock in the afternoon Augustine, pale, trembling, and with red eyes, was brought before her father and mother. The poor child related

artlessly the too brief story of her love. Reassured by her father, who promised to hear her through in silence, she gathered enough courage to utter the name of her dear Théodore de Sommervieux, dwelling with some diplomacy on the aristocratic particle. As she yielded to the hitherto unknown delight of speaking out her feelings, she found courage to say with innocent boldness that she loved Monsieur de Sommervieux and had written to him, adding, with tears in her eyes: "It would make me unhappy for life to sacrifice me to any one else."

"But Augustine, you do not know what a painter is," cried her mother, in horror.

"Madame Guillaume!" said the old father, imposing silence on his wife — "Augustine," he went on, "artists are generally poor, half-starved creatures. They squander what they have, and are always worthless. I know, for the late Monsieur Joseph Vernet, the late Monsieur Lekain, and the late Monsieur Noverre were customers of mine. My dear, if you knew the tricks that very Monsieur Noverre, and Monsieur le chevalier de Saint-Georges, and above all, Monsieur Philidor played upon my predecessor Père Chevrel! They are queer fellows, very queer. They all have a glib way of talking and fine manners. Now your Monsieur Sumer — Som —"

"De Sommervieux, papa."

"Well, so be it, — de Sommervieux, he never could

be as charming with you as Monsieur le chevalier de Saint-Georges was with me the day I obtained a consular sentence against him. That's how it was with people of good-breeding in those days."

"But papa, Monsieur Théodore is a nobleman, and he writes me that he is rich; his father was called the Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words Monsieur Guillaume looked at his terrible better-half, who was tapping her foot and keeping a dead silence with the air of a thwarted woman; she would not even cast her indignant eyes at Augustine, and seemed determined to leave the whole responsibility of the misguided affair to Monsieur Guillaume, inasmuch as her advice was not listened to. However, in spite of her apparent phlegm, she could not refrain from exclaiming, when she saw her husband playing such a gentle part in a catastrophe that was not commercial: "Really, monsieur, you are as weak as your daughter, but —"

The noise of a carriage stopping before the door interrupted the reprimand which the old merchant was dreading. A moment more, and Madame Roguin was in the middle of the room looking at the three actors in the domestic drama.

"I know all, cousin," she said, with a patronizing air.

If Madame Roguin had a fault, it was that of think-

ing that the wife of a Parisian notary could play the part of a great lady.

“I know all,” she repeated, “and I come to Noah’s Ark like the dove, with an olive-branch, — I read that allegory in the ‘Genius of Christianity,’” she remarked, turning to Madame Guillaume; “therefore the comparison ought to please you. Let me tell you,” she added, smiling at Augustine, “that Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man. He brought me this morning a portrait of myself, done with a masterly hand. It is worth at least six thousand francs.”

At these words she tapped lightly on Monsieur Guillaume’s arm. The old merchant could not refrain from pushing out his lips in a manner that was peculiar to him.

“I know Monsieur de Sommervieux very well,” continued the dove. “For the last fortnight he has attended my parties, and he is the present attraction of them. He told me all his troubles, and I am here on his behalf. I know that he adores Augustine, and is determined to have her. Ah! my dear cousin, don’t shake your head. Let me tell you that he is about to be made a baron, and that the Emperor himself, on the occasion of his visit to the Salon, made him a chevalier of the Legion of honor. Roguin is now his notary and knows all his affairs. Well, I can assure you that Monsieur de Sommervieux has good, sound property

which brings him in twelve thousand a year. Now, the father-in-law of a man in his position might count on becoming something of importance, — mayor of the arrondissement, for instance. Don't you remember how Monsieur Dupont was made count of the Empire and senator merely because, as mayor, it was his duty to congratulate the Emperor on his entrance to Vienna? Yes, yes, this marriage must take place. I adore the young man, myself. His behavior to Augustine is hardly met with now-a-days outside of a novel. Don't fret, my dear child, you will be happy, and everybody will envy you. There 's the Duchesse de Carigliano, she comes to my parties and delights in Monsieur de Somervieux. Gossiping tongues do say she comes to my house only to meet him, — just as if a duchess of yesterday was out of place in the salon of a Chevrel whose family can show a hundred years of good, sound bourgeoisie behind it. Augustine," added Madame Roguin, after a slight pause, "I have seen the portrait. Heavens! it is lovely. Did you know the Emperor had asked to see it? He said, laughing, to the vice-chamberlain, that if he had many women like that at his court so many kings would flock there that he could easily keep the peace of Europe. Was n't that flattering?"

The domestic storms with which the day began were something like those of nature, for they were followed

by calm and serene weather. Madame Roguin's arguments were so seductive, she managed to pull so many cords in the withered hearts of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume that she at least found one which enabled her to carry the day. At this singular period of our national history, commerce and finance were to a greater degree than ever before possessed with an insane desire to ally themselves with the nobility, and the generals of the Empire profited immensely by this sentiment. Monsieur Guillaume, however, was remarkable for his opposition to this curious passion. His favorite axioms were that if a woman wanted happiness she ought to marry a man of her own class; that persons were always sooner or later punished for trying to climb too high; that love could ill endure the petty annoyances of home-life, and that persons should look only for solid virtues in each other; that neither of the married pair should know more than the other, because the first requisite was complete mutual understanding; and that a husband who spoke Greek and a wife who spoke Latin would be certain to die of hunger. He promulgated that last remark as a sort of proverb. He compared marriages thus made to those old-fashioned stuffs of silk and wool in which the silk always ended by wearing out the wool. And yet, there was so much vanity at the bottom of his heart that the prudence of the pilot who had guided with such wisdom the affairs of the

Cat-playing-ball succumbed to the 'aggressive' volubility of Madame Roguin. The stern Madame Guillaume was the first to derogate from her principles and to find in her daughter's inclinations an excuse for so doing. She consented to receive Monsieur de Sommervieux at her house, resolving in her own mind to examine him rigorously.

The old merchant went at once to find Joseph Lebas and explain to him the situation of things. At half-past six that evening the dining-room immortalized by the painter contained under its skylight Monsieur and Madame Roguin, the young artist and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who found his comfort in submission, and Mademoiselle Virginie, whose headache had disappeared. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume beheld in perspective the establishment of both their daughters, and the certainty that the fortunes of the Cat-playing-ball were likely to pass into good hands. Their satisfaction was at its height when, at dessert, Théodore presented to them the marvellous picture, representing the interior of the old shop (which they had not yet seen), to which was due the happiness of all present.

"Is n't it pretty!" cried Monsieur Guillaume; "and they give you thirty thousand francs for it?"

"Why, there are my lappets!" exclaimed Madame Guillaume.

“And the goods unfolded!” added Lebas; “you might take them in your hand.”

“All kinds of stuffs are good to paint,” replied the painter. “We should be only too happy, we modern artists, if we could approach the perfection of ancient draperies.”

“Ha! so you like drapery?” cried Père Guillaume. “Shake hands, my young friend. If you value commerce we shall soon understand each other. Why, indeed, should persons despise it? The world began with trade, for didn’t Adam sell Paradise for an apple? It did not turn out a very good speculation, by the bye!”

And the old merchant burst into a hearty laugh, excited by the champagne which he was circulating liberally. The bandage over the eyes of the young lover was so thick that he thought his new parents very agreeable. He was not above amusing them with a few little caricatures, all in good taste. He pleased every one. Later, when the party had dispersed, and the salon, furnished in a way that was “rich and warm,” to use the draper’s own expression, was deserted, and while Madame Guillaume was going about from table to table and from candelabra to candlestick, hastily blowing out the lights, the worthy merchant who could see clearly enough when it was a question of money or of business, called his daughter Augus-

tine, and, placing her on his knee, made her the following harangue : --

“ My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux since you wish it ; I give you permission to risk your capital of happiness. But I am not taken in by those thirty thousand francs, said to be earned by spoiling good canvas. Money that comes so quickly goes as quickly. Didn't I hear that young scatterbrain say this very evening that if money was coined round it was meant to roll ? Ha ! if it is round for spendthrifts, it is flat for economical folks who pile it up. Now, my child, your handsome youth talks of giving you carriages and diamonds. If he has money and chooses to spend it on you, *bene sit* ; I have nothing to say. But as to what I shall give you, I don't choose that any of my hard-earned money shall go for carriages and trumpery. He who spends too much is never rich. Your dowry of three hundred thousand francs won't buy all Paris, let me tell you ; and you need n't reckon on a few hundred thousand more, for I'll make you wait for them a long time yet, God willing ! So I took your lover into a corner and talked to him ; and a man who manœvred the failure of Lecocq did n't have much trouble in getting an artist to agree that his wife's property should be settled on herself. I shall have an eye to the contract and see that he makes the proper settlements upon you. Now, my dear, I hope you'll make

me a grandfather, and for that reason, faith, I'm beginning to think about my grandchildren. Swear to me, therefore, that you will not sign any paper about money without first consulting me; and if I should go to rejoin Père Chevrel too soon, promise me to consult Lebas, who is to be your brother-in-law. Will you promise and swear these two things?"

"Oh, yes, papa, I swear it."

At the words, uttered in a tender voice, the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night all the lovers slept as peacefully as Monsieur and Madame Guillaume.

A few months after that memorable Sunday the high altar of Saint-Leu witnessed two marriages very unlike each other. Augustine and Théodore approached it beaming with happiness, their eyes full of love, elegantly attired, and attended by a brilliant company. Virginie, leaning on the arm of her father, followed her young sister in humbler guise, like a shadow needed for the harmony of the picture. Monsieur Guillaume had taken infinite pains to so arrange the wedding that Virginie's marriage should take precedence of Augustine's; but he had the grief of seeing that the higher and lesser clergy one and all addressed the younger and more elegant of the brides first. He overheard some of his neighbors highly commending Mademoiselle

Virginie's good sense in making, as they said, a solid marriage and remaining faithful to "the quarter;" and he also overheard a few sneers, prompted by envy, about Augustine who had chosen to marry an artist, a nobleman, coupled with a pretended fear that if the Guillaumes were becoming ambitious the draper's trade was ruined. When an old dealer in fans declared that the young spendthrift would soon bring his wife to poverty, Monsieur Guillaume congratulated himself *in petto* for his prudence as to the marriage settlements.

That night, after an elegant ball followed by one of those sumptuous suppers that are almost forgotten by the present generation, Monsieur and Madame Guillaume remained at a house belonging to them in the rue du Colombier, where the wedding party took place, and where they intended to live in future; Monsieur and Madame Lebas returned in a hired coach to the rue Saint-Denis and took the helm of the Cat-playing-ball; while the artist, intoxicated with his happiness, caught his dear Augustine in his arms as their coupé reached the rue des Trois-Frères, and carried her to an apartment decorated with the treasures of all the arts.

The raptures of passion to which Théodore now delivered himself up carried the young household through one whole year without a single cloud to dim the blue of the sky beneath which they lived. To such lovers existence brought no burden; each day some new and

exquisite *fleur-de-lis* of pleasure were evolved by Théodore, who delighted in varying the transports of love with the soft languor of those moments of repose when souls float upward into ecstasy and there forget corporeal union. Augustine, wholly incapable of reflection, gave herself up to the undulating current of her happiness; she felt she could not yield too much to the sanctioned and sacred love of marriage; simple and artless, she knew nothing of the coquetry of denial, still less of the ascendancy a young girl of rank obtains over a husband by clever caprices; she loved too well to calculate the future, and never once imagined that so enchanting a life could come to an end. Happy in being all the life and all the joy of her husband, she believed his inextinguishable love would forever crown her with the noblest of wreaths, just as her devotion and her obedience would remain a perpetual attraction. In fact, the felicity of love had made her so brilliant that her beauty filled her with pride and inspired her with a sense that she could always reign over a man so easy to impassion as Monsieur de Sommervieux. Thus her womanhood gave her no other instructions than those of love. In the bosom of her happiness she was still the ignorant little girl who lived obscurely in the rue Saint-Denis, with no thought of acquiring the manners, or the education, or the tone of the world in which she was to live. Her words were the words of love, and

there, indeed, she did display a certain suppleness of mind and delicacy of expression ; but she was using a language common to all womankind when plunged into a passion which seems their element. If, by chance, Augustine gave utterance to some idea that jarred with those of Théodore, the artist laughed, just as we laugh at the first mistakes of a stranger speaking our language, though they weary us if not corrected.

In spite of all this ardent love, Sommervieux felt, at the end of a year as enchanting as it had been rapid, the need of going back to his work and his old habits. Moreover, his wife was *enceinte*. He renewed his relations with his friends. During the long year of physical suffering, when, for the first time, a young wife carries and nurses an infant, he worked, no doubt, with ardor ; but occasionally he returned for some amusement to the distractions of society. The house to which he preferred to go was that of the Duchesse de Carigliano, who had finally attracted the now celebrated artist to her parties.

When Augustine recovered, and her son no longer required assiduous cares which kept his mother from social life, Théodore had reached a point where self-love roused in him a desire to appear before the world with a beautiful woman whom all men should envy and admire. The delight of showing herself in fashionable salons decked with the fame she derived from her hus-

band, was to Augustine a new harvest of pleasures, but it was also the last that conjugal happiness was to bring her.

She began by offending her husband's vanity ; for, in spite of all his efforts, her ignorance, the incorrectness of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas, viewed from the standpoint of her present surroundings, were manifest. The character of de Sommervieux, held in check for nearly two years and a half by the first transports of love, now took, under the calm of a possession no longer fresh, its natural bent, and he returned to the habits which had for a time been diverted from their course. Poetry, painting, and the exquisite enjoyments of the imagination possess inalienable rights over minds that can rise to them. These needs had not been balked in Théodore during those two and a half years ; they had simply found another nourishment. When the fields of love were explored, when the artist, like the children, had gathered the roses and the wake-robins with such eagerness that he did not notice his hands were full, the scene changed. It now happened that when the artist showed his wife a sketch of his most beautiful compositions, he took notice that she answered, in the tone of Monsieur Guillaume, " Oh, how pretty ! " Such admiration, without the slightest warmth, did not come, he felt, from an inward feeling, it was the expression of blind love. Augustine preferred a glance

of love to the noblest work of art. The only sublimity she was able to perceive was that in her own heart.

At last Théodore could not blind himself to the evidence of a bitter truth; his wife had no feeling for poetry; she could not live in his sphere of thought; she could not follow in the flight of his caprices, his impulses, his joys, his sorrows; she walked the earth in a real world, while his head sought the heavens. Ordinary minds cannot appreciate the ever-springing sufferings of one who, being united to another by the closest of all ties, is compelled to drive back within his own soul the precious overflow of his thoughts, and to crush into nothingness the images which some magic force compels him to create. To such a one the torture is the more cruel when his feeling for his companion commands him, as his first duty, to keep nothing from her, neither the outcome of his thoughts nor the effusions of his soul. The will of nature is not to be evaded; it is inexorable, like necessity, which is, as it were, a sort of social law. Sommervieux took refuge in the silence and solitude of his studio, hoping that the habit of living among artists might train his wife and develop the benumbed germs of mind which all superior souls believe to exist in other souls.

But, alas, Augustine was too sincerely religious not to be frightened at the tone of the artist-world. At the first dinner given by Théodore, a young painter said to

her, with a juvenile light-heartedness she was unable to understand, but which really absolves all jests about religion: "Why, madame, your paradise is not as glorious as Raffaele's Transfiguration, but I get a little tired of looking even at that." Augustine, consequently, met this brilliant and artistic society in a spirit of disapproval, which was at once perceived. She became a constraint upon it. When artists are constrained they are pitiless; they either fly, or they stay and scoff.

Madame Guillaume had, among other absurdities, that of magnifying the dignity she considered to be an appanage of a married woman; and though Augustine had often laughed about it she was unable to keep herself from a slight imitation of the maternal prudery. This exaggeration of purity, which virtuous women do not always escape, gave rise to a few harmless caricatures and epigrams, innocent nonsense in good taste, with which de Sommervieux could scarcely be angry. In fact, such jests were only reprisals on the part of his friends. Still, nothing could be really a jest to a soul so ready as that of Théodore to receive impressions from without. Thus he was led, perhaps insensibly, to a coldness of feeling which went on increasing. Whoso desires to reach perfect conjugal happiness must climb a mountain along a narrow way close to a sharp and slippery precipice; down that precipice

the artist's love now slid. He believed his wife incapable of understanding the moral considerations which justified, to his mind, the course he now adopted towards her; and he thought himself innocent in hiding thoughts she could not comprehend, and in doing acts which could never be justified before the tribunal of her commonplace conscience.

Augustine retired into gloomy and silent sorrow. These secret feelings drew a veil between the married pair which grew thicker day by day. Though her husband did not cease his attentions to her, Augustine could not keep from trembling when she saw him reserving for society the treasures of mind and charm which he had hitherto bestowed on her. Soon she took fatally to heart the lively talk she heard in the world about man's inconstancy. She made no complaint, but her whole bearing was equivalent to a reproach. Three years after her marriage this young and pretty woman, who seemed so brilliant in her brilliant equipage, who lived in a sphere of fame and wealth, always envied by careless and unobserving people who never rightly estimate the situations of life, was a prey to bitter grief; her color faded; she reflected, she compared; and then, at last, sorrow revealed to her the axioms of experience.

She resolved to maintain herself courageously within the circle of her duty, hoping that such generous conduct would, sooner or later, win back her husband's

love ; but it was not to be. When Sommervieux, tired of work, left his studio, Augustine never hid her work so quickly that the artist did not see her mending the household linen or his own with the minute care of a good housekeeper. She supplied, generously and without a word, the money required for her husband's extravagances ; but in her desire to save her dear Théodore's own fortune she was too economical on herself and on certain details of the housekeeping. Such conduct is incompatible with the free and easy ways of artists, who, when they reach the end of their tether, have enjoyed life so much that they never ask the reason of their ruin.

It is useless to note each lowered tone of color through which the brilliancy of their honeymoon faded and then expired, leaving them in deep darkness. One evening poor Augustine, who had lately heard her husband speaking with enthusiasm of the Duchesse de Carigliano, received some ill-natured information on the nature of de Sommervieux's attachment to that celebrated coquette of the imperial court. At twenty-one, in the glow of youth and beauty, Augustine learned she was betrayed for a woman of thirty-six. Feeling herself wretched in the midst of society and of *fêtes* that were now a desert to her, the poor little creature no longer noticed the admiration she excited nor the envy she inspired. Her face took another expression. Sorrow laid

upon each feature the gentleness of resignation and the pallor of rejected love. It was not long before men, known for their seductive powers, courted her; but she remained solitary and virtuous. A few contemptuous words which escaped her husband brought her to intolerable despair. Fatal gleams of light now showed her the points where, through the pettiness of her education, complete union between her soul and that of Théodore had been prevented; and her love was great enough to absolve him and blame herself. She wept tears of blood as she saw, too late, that there are ill-assorted marriages of minds as well as of habits and of ranks.

Thinking over the spring-tide happiness of their union, she comprehended the fulness of her past joys, and admitted to her own soul that so rich a harvest of love was indeed a lifetime which might well be paid for by her present sorrow. And yet she loved with too single a mind to lose all hope; and she was brave enough at one-and-twenty to endeavor to educate herself and make her imagination more worthy of the one she so admired. "If I am not a poet," she said in her heart, "at least I will understand poetry." Employing that force of will and energy which all women possess when they love, Madame de Sommerieux attempted to change her nature, her habits, and her ideas; but though she read many volumes and

studied with the utmost courage, she only succeeded in making herself less ignorant. Quickness of mind and the charms of conversation are gifts of nature or the fruits of an education begun in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but she could not sing with taste. She understood literature and even the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to train her rebellious memory. She listened with interest to conversation in society, but she contributed nothing to it. Her religious ideas and the prejudices of her early youth prevented the complete emancipation of her mind. And besides all this, a bias against her which she could not conquer had, little by little, glided into her husband's mind. The artist laughed in his heart at those who praised his wife to him, and his laughter was not unfounded. Embarrassed by her strong desire to please him, she felt her mind and her knowledge melt away in his presence. Even her fidelity displeased the unfaithful husband; it seemed as though he would fain see her guilty of wrong when he complained of her virtue as unfeeling. Augustine struggled hard to abdicate her reason, to yield and bend to the fancies and caprices of her husband, and to devote her whole life to soothe the egotism of his vanity, — she never gathered the fruit of her sacrifices. Perhaps they had each let the moment go by when souls can comprehend each other. The day came when the too-sensitive heart of the young wife

received a blow, — one of those shocks which strain the ties of feeling so far that it seems as though they snapped. At first she isolated herself. But soon the fatal thought entered her mind to seek advice and consolation from her own family.

Accordingly, one morning early, she drove to the grotesque entrance of the silent and gloomy house in which her childhood had been passed. She sighed as she looked at the window from which she had sent a first kiss to him who had filled her life with fame and sorrow. Nothing was changed in those cavernous precincts, except that the business had taken a new lease of life. Augustine's sister sat behind the counter in her mother's old place. The poor afflicted woman met her brother-in-law with a pen behind his ear, and he hardly listened to her, so busy was he. The alarming signs of an approaching "inventory" were evident, and in a few moments he left her, asking to be excused.

Her sister received her rather coldly, and showed some ill-will. In fact, Augustine in her palmy days, brilliant in happiness and driving about in a pretty equipage, had never come to see her sister except in passing. The wife of the prudent Lebas now imagined that money was the cause of this early visit, and she assumed a reserved tone, which made Augustine smile. The artist's wife saw that her mother had a counterpart (except for the lappets of her cap) who

would keep up the antique dignity of the Cat-playing-ball. At breakfast, however, she noticed certain changes which did honor to the good sense of Joseph Lebas, — the clerks no longer rose and went away at dessert; they were allowed to use their faculty of speech, and the abundance on the table showed ease and comfort, without luxury. The young woman of society noticed the coupons of a box at the Français, where she remembered having seen her sister from time to time. Madame Lebas wore a cashmere shawl over her shoulders, the elegance of which was a sign of the generosity with which her husband treated her. In short, the pair were advancing with their century.

Augustine was deeply moved to see, during the course of the day, many signs of a calm and equable happiness enjoyed by this well-assorted couple, — a happiness without exaltation, it was true, but also without peril. They had taken life as a commercial enterprise, in which their first duty was to honor their business. Not finding in her husband any great warmth of love, Virginie had set to work to produce it. Led insensibly to respect and to cherish his wife, the time it took for their wedded happiness to blossom now seemed to Joseph Lebas as a pledge of its duration; so, when the sorrowful Augustine told her tale of trouble, she was forced to endure a deluge of the

commonplace ideas which the ethics of the rue Saint-Denis suggested to Virginie.

“The evil is done, wife,” said Joseph Lebas; “we must now try to give our sister the best advice.” Whereupon, the able man of business ponderously explained the relief that the laws and established customs might give to Augustine, and so enable her to surmount her troubles. He numbered, if we may so express it, all the considerations; ranged them in categories, as though they were goods of different qualities; then he put them in the scales, weighed them, and finally came to the conclusion that necessity required his sister-in-law to take a firm stand, — a decision which did not satisfy the love she still felt for her husband, a feeling that was reawakened in full force when she heard Lebas discussing judicial methods of asserting her rights. Augustine thanked her two friends and returned home, more undecided than before she consulted them.

The next day she ventured to the house in the rue du Colombier, intending to confide her sorrows to her father and mother, for she was like those hopelessly ill persons who try all remedies in sheer despair, even the recipes of old women. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume received their daughter with a warmth that touched her; the visit brought an interest which, to them, was a treasure. For four years they had floated

on the sea of life like navigators without chart or compass. Sitting in their chimney-corner, they told each other again and again the disasters of the *maximum*; the story of their first purchases of cloth, the manner in which they escaped bankruptcy, and above all, the tale of the famous Leecocq failure, old Guillaume's battle of Marengo. Then, when these stock stories were exhausted, they recapitulated the profits of their most productive years, or reminded each other of the gossip of the Saint-Denis quarter. At two o'clock Père Guillaume invariably went out to give an eye to the establishment of the Cat-playing-ball; on his way back he stopped at all the shops which were formerly his rivals, whose young proprietors now endeavored to inveigle the old merchant into speculative investments which, according to his usual custom, he never positively declined. Two good Norman horses were dying of plethora in the stable, but Madame Guillaume never used them except to be conveyed on Sundays to high mass at the parish church. Three times a week the worthy couple kept open table.

Thanks to the influence of his son-in-law, de Sommervieux, Père Guillaume had been appointed member of the advisory committee on the equipment of troops. Ever since her husband had held that high post under government, Madame Guillaume had felt it her duty to maintain its dignity; her rooms were therefore encum-

bered with so many ornaments of gold and silver, so much tasteless though costly furniture, that the simplest of them looked like a tawdry chapel. Economy and prodigality seemed fighting for precedence in all the accessories of the house. It really looked as if old Guillaume had considered the purchase of everything in it, down to a candlestick, as an investment. In the midst of this bazaar, de Sommervieux's famous picture held the place of honor, and was a source of consolation to Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, who turned their spectacled eyes twenty times a day on that transcript of their old life, to them so active and so exciting.

The appearance of the house and of these rooms where all things had an odor of old age and mediocrity, the spectacle of the two old people stranded on a rock far from the real world and the ideas that move it, surprised and affected Augustine; she recognized the second half of the picture which had struck her so forcibly at the house of Joseph Lebas, — that of an active life without movement, a sort of mechanical and instinctive existence, like that of rolling on castors; and there came into her mind a sense of pride in her sorrows as she remembered how they sprang from a happiness of eighteen months duration, worth more to her than a thousand existences like this, the void of which now seemed to her horrible. But she hid the rather un-

kindly thought, and displayed her new qualities of mind to her old parents and the endearing tenderness which love had taught her, hoping to win them to listen favorably to her matrimonial trials.

Old people delight in such confidences. Madame Guillaume wished to hear the minutest particulars of that strange life which, to her, was almost fabulous. "The Travels of the Baron de La Houtan," which she had begun many times and never finished, had revealed to her nothing more inconceivable among the savages of Canada.

"But, my dear child," she said, "do you mean to say that your husband shuts himself up with naked women, and you are simple enough to believe he paints them?" With these words she laid her spectacles on a work-table, shook out her petticoats, and laid her clasped hands on her knees, raised by a foot-warmer, — her favorite attitude.

"But, my dear mother, all painters are obliged to employ models."

"He took care not to tell us *that* when he asked you in marriage. If I had known it I would never have given my daughter to a man with such a trade. Religion forbids such horrors; they are immoral. What time of night do you say he comes home?"

"Oh, at one o'clock, — or two, perhaps."

The old people looked at each other in amazement.

“Then he gambles,” said Monsieur Guillaume. “In my day it was only gamblers who stayed out so late.”

Augustine made a little face to deny the accusation.

“You must suffer dreadfully waiting for him,” said Madame Guillaume. “But no, you go to bed, I hope, — don’t you? Then when he has gambled away all his money, the monster comes home and wakes you up?”

“No, mother; on the contrary, he is sometimes very gay; indeed, when the weather is fine, he often asks me to get up and go into the woods with him.”

“Into the woods! — at that hour? Your house must be very small if he has n’t room enough in it to stretch his legs! No, no, it is to give you cold that the villain makes such proposals as that; he wants to get rid of you. Did any one ever know a decent man with a home of his own and a steady business galloping round like a were-wolf!”

“But, my dear mother, you don’t understand that he needs excitements to develop his genius. He loves the scenes which —”

“Scenes! I’d make him fine scenes, I would,” cried Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. “How can you keep on any terms at all with such a man? And I don’t like that idea of his drinking nothing but water. It is n’t wholesome. Why does he dislike to see women eat? what a strange notion! He’s a mad-man, that’s what he is. All that you say of him proves

it. No sane man leaves his home without a word, and stays away ten days. He told you he went to Dieppe to paint the sea! How can anyone paint the sea? He told you such nonsense to blind you."

Augustine opened her lips to defend her husband; but Madame Guillaume silenced her with a motion of her hand which the old habit of obedience led her to obey, and the old woman continued, in a sharp voice: "Don't talk to me of that man. He never set foot in a church except to marry you. Persons who have no religion are capable of anything. Did your father ever venture to hide anything from me; or keep silent three days without saying boo to me, and then begin to chatter like a blind magpie? No!"

"My dear mother, you judge superior men too severely. If they had ideas like other people they would not be men of genius."

"Well! then men of genius should keep to themselves and not marry. Do you mean to tell me that a man can make his wife miserable, and if he has got genius it is all right? Genius! I don't see much genius in saying a thing is black and white in the same breath, and ramming people's words down their throats; and lording it over his family, and never letting his wife know how to take him, and forbidding her to amuse herself unless monsieur, forsooth, is gay, and forcing her to be gloomy as soon as he is—"

“But, my dear mother, the reason for all such imaginations —”

“What do you mean by all such imaginations?” cried Madame Guillaume, again interrupting her daughter. “He has fine ones, faith! What sort of man is he who takes a notion, without consulting a doctor, to eat nothing but vegetables? If he did it out of piety, such a diet might do him some good; but he has no more religion than a Huguenot. Who ever saw a man in his senses love a horse better than he loves his neighbor, and have his hair curled like a pagan image; and cover his statues with muslin, and shut up the windows in the daytime to work by lamplight? Come, come; don’t talk to me; if he were not so grossly immoral he ought to be put in the insane asylum. You had better consult Monsieur Loraux, the vicar of Saint-Sulpice; ask him what he thinks of all this. He’ll tell you that your husband does n’t behave like a Christian man.”

“Oh! mother, how can you think —”

“Think! yes I do think it! You used to love him and therefore you don’t see these things. But I remember how I saw him, not long after your marriage, in the Champs-Élysées. He was on horseback. Well, he galloped at full speed for a little distance, then he stopped and went at a snail’s pace. I said to myself then, ‘There’s a man who has no sense.’”

“Ah!” cried Monsieur Guillaume, rubbing his hands;

“what a good thing it is I had your property settled on yourself.”

After Augustine had the imprudence to explain her real causes of complaint against her husband the two old people were silent with indignation. Madame Guillaume uttered the word “divorce.” It seemed to awaken the now inactive old business-man. Moved by his love for his daughter and also by the excitement such a step would give to his eventless life, Père Guillaume roused himself to action. He demanded divorce, talked of managing it, argued the pros and cons, and promised his daughter to pay all the costs, engage the lawyers, see the judges, and move heaven and earth. Madame de Sommervieux, much alarmed, refused his services declaring she would not separate from her husband were she ten times more unhappy than she was, and saying no more about her sorrows. After the old people had endeavored, but in vain, to soothe her with many little silent and consoling attentions, Augustine went home feeling the impossibility of getting narrow minds to take a just view of superior men. She learned then that a wife should hide from all the world, even from her parents, the sorrows for which it is so difficult to obtain true sympathy. The storms and the sufferings of the higher spheres of human-existence are comprehended only by the noble minds which inhabit them. In all things, we can be justly judged only by our equals.

'Thus poor Augustine found herself once more in the cold atmosphere of her home, cast back into the horrors of her lonely meditations. Study no longer availed her, for study had not restored her husband's heart. Initiated into the secrets of those souls of fire but deprived of their resources, she entered deeply into their trials without sharing their joys. She became disgusted with the world, which seemed to her small and petty indeed in presence of events born of passion. In short, life to her was a failure.

One evening a thought came into her mind which illuminated the dark regions of her grief with a gleam of celestial light. Such a thought could have smiled into no heart that was less pure and guileless than hers. She resolved to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano, not to ask for the heart of her husband, but to learn from that great lady the arts which had taken him from her; to interest that proud woman of the world in the mother of her friend's children; to soften her, to make her the accomplice of her future peace, just as she was now the instrument of her present sorrow.

So, one day, the timid Augustine, armed with supernatural courage, got into her carriage about two o'clock in the afternoon, intending to make her way into the boudoir of the celebrated lady, who was never visible until that time of day.

Madame de Sommervieux had never yet seen any of

the old and sumptuous mansions of the faubourg Saint-Germain. When she passed through the majestic vestibule, the noble stairways, the vast salons; filled with flowers in spite of the inclemencies of the season, and decorated with the natural taste of women born to opulence or to the elegant habits of the aristocracy, Augustine was conscious of a terrible constriction of her heart. She envied the secrets of an elegance of which till then she had had no idea; she inhaled a breath of grandeur which explained to her the charm that house possessed over her husband.

When she reached the private apartments of the duchess she felt both jealousy and despair as she noted the voluptuous arrangement of the furniture; the draperies; the hangings upon the walls. There, disorder was a grace; there, luxury affected disdain of mere richness. The perfume of this soft atmosphere pleased the senses without annoying them. The accessories of these rooms harmonized with the vista of gardens and a lawn planted with trees seen through the windows. All was seductive, and yet no calculated seduction was felt. The genius of the mistress of these apartments pervaded the salon in which Augustine now awaited her. Madame de Sommervieux endeavored to guess the character of her rival from the objects about the room; but there was something impenetrable in its disorder as in its symmetry, and to the guileless Augustine it was

a sealed book. All that she could really make out was that the duchess was a superior woman *as woman*. The discovery brought her a painful thought:

“Alas! can it be true,” she said to herself, “that a simple and loving heart does not suffice an artist? and to balance the weight of their strong souls must they be joined to feminine souls whose force is equal to their own? If I had been brought up like this siren our weapons at least would have been matched for the struggle.”

“But I am not at home!” The curt, sharp words, though said in a low voice in the adjoining boudoir, were overheard by Augustine, whose heart throbbed:

“The lady is here,” said the waiting-woman.

“You are crazy! Show her in,” added the duchess, changing her voice to a cordially polite tone. Evidently she expected then to be overheard.

Augustine advanced timidly. At the farther end of the cool boudoir she saw the duchess luxuriously reclining on a brown-velvet ottoman placed in the centre of a species of half-circle formed by folds of muslin draped over a yellow ground. Ornaments of gilded bronze, arranged with exquisite taste, heightened still further the effect of the dais under which the duchess posed like an antique statue. The dark color of the velvet enabled her to lose no means of seduction. A soft *chiaro-scuro*, favorable to her beauty, seemed more a

reflection than a light. A few choice flowers lifted their fragrant heads from the Sèvres vases. As this scene caught the eye of the astonished Augustine she came forward so quickly and softly that she surprised a glance from the eyes of the enchantress. That glance seemed to say to a person whom at first the painter's wife could not see: "Wait; you shall see a pretty woman, and help me to put up with a tiresome visit."

As Augustine advanced the duchess rose, and made her sit beside her.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, madame?" she said, with a smile full of charm.

"Why so false?" thought Augustine, who merely bowed her head.

Silence was a necessity; for the young woman now saw a witness to the interview in the person of an officer of the army, — the youngest, and most elegant and dashing of the colonels. His clothes, which were those of a civilian, set off the graces of his person. His face, full of life and youth and very expressive, was still further enlivened by small moustachios, black as jet and waxed to a point, by a well-trimmed imperial, carefully combed whiskers and a forest of black hair which was somewhat in disorder. He played with a riding-whip and showed an ease and freedom of manner which agreed well with the satisfied expression of his face and the elegance of his dress; the ribbons in

his buttonhole were carelessly knotted and he seemed more vain of his appearance than of his courage. Augustine looked at the Duchesse de Carigliano, with a glance at the colonel in which many prayers were included.

“ Well, adieu, Monsieur d’Aiglemont ; we shall meet in the Bois de Boulogne,” said the siren, in a tone as if the words were the result of some agreement made before Augustine entered the room ; she accompanied them with a threatening glance, which the officer deserved, perhaps, for the undisguised admiration with which he looked at the modest flower who contrasted so admirably with the haughty duchess. The young dandy bowed in silence, turned on the heels of his boots, and gracefully left the room. At that moment Augustine, watching her rival whose eyes followed the brilliant officer, caught sight of a sentiment the fugitive expressions of which are known to every woman. She saw with bitter sorrow that her visit would be useless ; the artful duchess was too eager for homage not to have a pitiless heart.

“ Madame,” said Augustine, in a broken voice, “ the step I now take will seem very strange to you ; but despair has its madness, and that is my excuse. I can now understand only too well why Théodore prefers your house to mine, and how it is that your mind should exercise so great an empire over him. Alas !

I have but to look within myself to find reasons that are more than sufficient. But I adore my husband, madame. Two years of sorrow have not changed the love of my heart, though I have lost his. In my madness I have dared to believe that I might struggle against you; I have come to you to be told by what means I can triumph over you. Oh, madame!" cried the young woman, seizing the hand which her rival allowed her to take, "never will I pray God for my own happiness with such fervor as I will pray to him for yours, if you will help me to recover, I will not say the love, but the friendship of my husband. I have no longer any hope except in you. Ah! tell me how it is you have won him, and made him forget the early days of—"

At these words Augustine, choking with her sobs, was compelled to pause. Ashamed of her weakness, she covered her face with a handkerchief that was wet with tears.

"Ah, what a child you are, my dear little lady!" said the duchess, fascinated by the novelty of the scene and touched in spite of herself at receiving such homage from as perfect a virtue as there was in Paris, taking the young wife's handkerchief and herself drying her tears and soothing her with a few murmured monosyllables of graceful pity.

After a moment's silence the accomplished coquette,

clasping poor Augustine's pretty hands in her own, which had a rare character of noble beauty and power, said, in a gentle and even affectionate voice: "My first advice will be not to weep; tears are unbecoming. We must learn how to conquer sorrows which make us ill, for love will not stay long on a bed of pain. Sadness may at first bestow a certain charm which pleases a man, but it ends by sharpening the features and fading the color of the sweetest face. And remember, our tyrants have the self-love to require that their slaves shall be always gay."

"Ah, madame! is it within my power to cease feeling? How is it possible not to die a thousand deaths when we see a face which once shone for us with love and joy, now harsh, and cold, and indifferent? No, I cannot control my heart."

"So much the worse for you, my poor dear. But I think I already know your history. In the first place, be very sure that if your husband has been unfaithful to you, I am not his accomplice. If I made a point of attracting him to my salon, it was, I freely confess, out of vanity; he was famous, and he went nowhere. I like you too well already to tell you all the follies he has committed for me. But I shall reveal one of them because it may perhaps help us to bring him back to you, and to punish him for the audacity he has lately shown in his proceedings toward me. He will end by com-

promising me. I know the world too well, my dear, to put myself at the mercy of a superior man. Believe me, it is very well to let them court us, but to marry them is a blunder. We women should admire men of genius, enjoy them as we would a play, but live with them — never! No, no! it is like going behind the scenes and seeing the machinery, instead of sitting in our boxes and enjoying the illusions. But with you, my poor child, the harm is done, is it not? Well, then, you must try to arm yourself against tyranny.”

“ Ah, madame, as I entered this house and before I saw you I became aware of certain arts that I never suspected.”

“ Well, come and see me sometimes, and you will soon learn the science of such trifles, — really important, however, in their effects. External things are to fools more than one half of life; and for that reason more than one man of talent is a fool in spite of his superiority. I will venture to lay a wager that you have never refused anything to Théodore.”

“ How can we refuse anything to those we love? ”

“ Poor, innocent child! I adore your folly. Let me tell you that the more we love the less we should let a man, specially a husband, see the extent of our passion. Whoever loves the most is certain to be the one that is tyrannized over, and, worse than all, deserted sooner or later. Whoever desires to reign must — ”

“Oh, madame, must we all dissimulate, calculate, be false at heart, make ourselves an artificial nature, and forever? Oh, who could live thus? Could you —”

She hesitated; the duchess smiled.

“My dear,” resumed the great lady in a grave tone, “conjugal happiness has been from time immemorial a speculation, a matter which required particular study. If you persist in talking passion while I am talking marriage we shall never understand each other. Listen to me,” she continued, in a confidential tone. “I have been in the way of seeing many of the superior men of our day. Those of them who married chose, with few exceptions, women who were ciphers. Well, those women have governed them just as the Emperor governs us, and they have been, if not beloved, at least always respected by them. I am fond of secrets, especially those that concern our sex, and to amuse myself I have sought the key to that riddle. Well, my dear little angel, it is this, — those good women knew enough to analyze the characters of their husbands; without being frightened, as you have been, at their superiority, they have cleverly discovered the qualities those men lacked, and whether they themselves had them or only feigned to have them, they found means to make such a show of those very qualities before the eyes of their husbands that they ended by mastering them. Remember one thing more: those

souls which seem so great all have a little grain of folly in them, and it is our business to make the most of it. If we set our wills to rule them and let nothing deter us, but concentrate all our actions, our ideas, our fascinations upon that, we can master those eminently capricious minds, — for the very inconstancy of their thoughts gives us the means of influencing them.”

“Oh!” cried the young wife, horror-struck, “can that be life? Then it is a battle —”

“— in which whoso would win must threaten,” said the duchess laughing. “Our power is artificial. Consequently we should never let a man despise us; we can never rise after such a fall except through vile manœuvres. Come,” she added, “I will give you the means to hold your husband in chains.”

She rose, and guided her young and innocent pupil in conjugal wiles through the labyrinths of her little palace. They came presently to a private staircase which communicated with the state apartments. When the duchess touched the secret lock of the door she stopped, looked at Augustine with an inimitable air of wiliness and grace, and said, smiling: “My dear, the Duc de Carigliano adores me, — well, he would not dare to enter this door without my permission. Yet he is a man who has the habit of command over thousands of soldiers. He can face a battery, but in my presence — he is afraid.”

Augustine sighed. They reached a noble gallery, where the duchess led the painter's wife before the portrait Théodore had once made of Mademoiselle Guillaume. At sight of it Augustine uttered a cry.

"I knew it was no longer in the house," she said, "but — here!"

"My dear child, I exacted it only to see how far the folly of a man of genius would go. I intended to return it to you sooner or later; for I did not expect the pleasure of seeing the original standing before the copy. I will have the picture taken to your carriage while we finish our conversation. If, armed with that talisman, you are not mistress of your husband during the next hundred years, you are not a woman and you deserve your fate."

Augustine kissed the hand of the great lady, who pressed her to her heart with all the more tenderness because she was certain to have forgotten her on the morrow. This scene might have destroyed forever the purity and candor of a less virtuous woman than Augustine, to whom the secrets revealed by the duchess could have been either salutary or fatal; but the astute policy of the higher social spheres suited Augustine as little as the narrow reasoning of Joseph Lebas or the silly morality of Madame Guillaume. Strange result of the false positions into which we are thrown by the even trivial mistakes we make in life! Augustine was

like an Alpine herdsman overtaken by an avalanche; if he hesitates, or listens to the cries of his comrades, he is lost. In these great crises the heart either breaks or hardens.

Madame de Sommervieux returned home a prey to an agitation it is difficult to describe. Her conversation with the duchess had roused a thousand contradictory ideas in her mind. Like the sheep of the fable, full of courage when the wolf was away, she preached to herself and laid down admirable lines of conduct; she imagined stratagems of coquetry; she talked to her husband, he being absent, with all the resources of that eloquence which never leaves a woman; then, remembering the glance of Théodore's fixed, light eyes, she trembled with fear. When she asked if Monsieur were at home, her voice failed her. Hearing that he would not be at home to dinner, she was conscious of a feeling of inexplicable relief. Like a criminal who appeals against a death-sentence, the delay, however short, seemed to her a lifetime.

She placed the portrait in her bedroom, and awaited her husband in all the agonies of hope. Too well she knew that this attempt would decide her whole future, and she trembled at every sound, even at the ticking of her clock, which seemed to increase her fears by measuring them. She tried to cheat time; the idea occurred to her to dress in a manner that made her still

*“The timid wife, half dead with fear, watched the
changing brow.”*



Latour-Darrouzeaux.

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Procédé Goupi

more like the portrait. Then, knowing her husband's uneasy nature, she caused her rooms to be lighted up with unusual brilliancy, certain that curiosity would bring him to her as soon as he came in. Midnight sounded, and at the groom's cry the gates opened and the painter's carriage rolled into the silent courtyard.

"What is the meaning of all this illumination?" asked Théodore, gayly, as he entered his wife's room.

Augustine took advantage of so favorable a moment and threw herself into his arms as she pointed to the portrait. The artist stood still; immovable as a rock, gazing alternately at Augustine and at the tell-tale canvas. The timid wife, half-dead with fear, watched the changing brow, that terrible brow, and saw the cruel wrinkles gathering like clouds; then the blood seemed to curdle in her veins when, with a flaming eye and a husky voice, he began to question her.

"Where did you get that picture?"

"The Duchesse de Carigliano returned it to me."

"Did you ask her for it?"

"I did not know she had it."

The softness, or rather the enchanting melody of that angel voice might have turned the heart of cannibals, but not that of an artist in the tortures of wounded vanity.

"It is worthy of her!" cried the artist, in a voice of thunder. "I will be revenged!" he said, striding up

and down the room. "She shall die of shame; I will paint her, — yes, I will exhibit her in the character of Messalina leaving Claudius' palace by night."

"Théodore!" said a faint voice.

"I will kill her!"

"My husband!"

"She loves that little cavalry colonel, because he rides well!"

"Théodore!"

"Let me alone!" said the painter to his wife, in a voice that was almost a roar.

The scene is too repulsive to depict here; the rage of the artist led him, before it ended, to words and acts which a woman less young and timid than Augustine would have ascribed to insanity.

About eight o'clock on the following morning Madame Guillaume found her daughter pale, with red eyes and her hair in disorder, gazing on the fragments of a painted canvas and the pieces of a broken frame which lay scattered on the floor. Augustine, almost unconscious with grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture of despair.

"It is not such a very great loss," cried the old woman. "It was very like you, that's true; but I'm told there is a man on the boulevard who paints charming portraits for a hundred and fifty francs."

"Ah, mother!"

“Poor dear! well, you are right,” answered Madame Guillaume, mistaking the meaning of the look her daughter gave her; “there is nothing so tender as a mother’s love. My dearest, I can guess it all; tell me your troubles and I’ll comfort you. Your maid has told me dreadful things; I always said your husband was a madman, — why, he’s a monster!”

Augustine put her finger on her pallid lips as if to implore silence. During that terrible night sorrow had brought her the patient resignation which, in mothers and in loving women, surpasses in its effects all other human forces, and reveals, perhaps, the existence of certain fibres in the hearts of women which God has denied to those of men.

An inscription engraved on a broken column in the cemetery of Montmartre states that Madame de Somervieux died at twenty-seven years of age. Between the simple lines of her epitaph a friend of the timid creature reads the last scenes of a drama. Every year, on the solemn second of November, as he passes before that early grave he never fails to ask himself if stronger women than Augustine are not needed for the powerful clasp of genies.

“The modest, humble flower, blooming in the valley dies,” he thought, “if transplanted nearer to heaven, to the regions where the storms gather and the sun wilts.”

COLONEL CHABERT.

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE IDA DE BOCARMÉ
NÉE DU CHASTELET.

“ THERE ’s our old top-coat again ! ”

This exclamation came from the lips of a clerk of the species called in Parisian law-offices “ gutter-jumpers,” who was at the moment munching with a very good appetite a slice of bread. He took a little of the crumb and made a pellet, which he flung, with a laugh, through the blinds of the window against which he was leaning. Well-aimed, the pellet rebounded nearly to the height of the window after hitting the hat of a stranger who was crossing the courtyard of a house in the rue Vivienne, where Maitre Derville, the lawyer, resided.

“ Come, come, Simonnin, don’t play tricks, or I’ll turn you off. No matter how poor a client may be, he is a man, the devil take you ! ” said the head-clerk, pausing as he added up a bill of costs.

The gutter-jumper is usually, like Simonnin, a lad of thirteen or fourteen years of age, who in all law-offices is under the particular supervision of the head-clerk, whose errands he does, and whose love-letters he carries, together with the writs of the courts and the petitions entered. He belongs to the *gamin de Paris* through his ethics, and to the pettifogging side of law through fate. The lad is usually pitiless, undisciplined, totally without reverence, a scoffer, a writer of epigrams, lazy, and also greedy. Nevertheless, all such little fellows have an old mother living on some fifth story, with whom they share the thirty or forty francs they earn monthly."

"If it is a man, why do you call him an 'old top-coat,'" said Simonnin, in the tone of a scholar who detects his master in a mistake.

Thereupon he returned to the munching of his bread with a bit of cheese, leaning his shoulder against the window-frame; for he took his rest standing, like the horses of the hackney-coaches, with one leg raised and supported against the other.

"Could n't we play that old guy some trick?" said the third clerk, Godeschal, in a low voice, stopping in the middle of a legal document he was dictating to be engrossed by the fourth clerk and copied by two neophytes from the provinces. Having made the above suggestion, he went on with his dictation: "*But in*

his gracious and benevolent wisdom His Majesty Louis the Eighteenth, — Write all the letters, hi, there! Desroches the learned! — so soon as he recovered the reins of power, understood — What did that fat joker understand, I'd like to know? — the high mission to which Divine Providence had called him! Put an exclamation mark and six dots; they are pious enough at the Palais to let 'em pass — and his first thought was, as is proved by the date of the ordinance herein named, to repair evils caused by the frightful and lamentable disasters of the revolutionary period by restoring to his faithful and numerous adherents — 'Numerous' is a bit of flattery which ought to please the court — all their unsold property wheresoever situate, whether in the public domain or the ordinary and extraordinary crown domains, or in the endowments of public institutions; for we contend and hold ourselves able to maintain that such is the spirit and the meaning of the gracious ordinance, rendered in — ”

“Stop, stop,” said Godeschal to the three clerks; “that rascally sentence has come to the end of my paper and is n't done yet. Well,” he added, stopping to wet the back of the cahier with his tongue to turn the thick page of his stamped paper, “if you want to play the old top-coat a trick tell him that the master is so busy he can talk to clients only between two and three

o'clock in the morning; we'll see if he comes then, the old villain!" and Godeschal returned to his dictation: "*gracious ordinance rendered in* — Have you got that down?"

"Yes," cried the three copyists.

"*Rendered in* — Hi, papa Boucard, what's the date of that ordinance? Dot your i's, *unam et omnes* — it fills up."

"*Omnes*," repeated one of the clerks before Boucard, the head-clerk, could answer.

"Good heavens! you have n't written that, have you?" cried Godeschal, looking at the provincial newcomer with a truculent air.

"Yes, he has," said Desroches, the fourth clerk, leaning over to look at his neighbor's copy, "he has written, 'Dot your i's, and he spells it e-y-e-s.'"

All the clerks burst into a roar of laughter.

"Do you call that a law-term, Monsieur Huré?" cried Simonnin, "and you say you come from Mortagne!"

"Scratch it out carefully," said the head-clerk. "If one of the judges were to get hold of the petition and see that, the master would never hear the last of it. Come, no more such blunders, Monsieur Huré; a Norman ought to know better than to write a petition carelessly; it's the 'Shoulder-arms!' of the legal guild."

Rendered in — in —" went on Godeschal. "Do tell me when, Boucard?"

“ June, 1814,” replied the head-clerk, without raising his head from his work.

A knock at the door interrupted the next sentence of the prolix petition. Five grinning clerks, with lively, satirical eyes and curly heads, turned their noses towards the door, having all shouted with one voice, “ Come in ! ” Boucard remained with his head buried in a mound of deeds, and went on making out the bill of costs on which he was employed.

The office was a large room, furnished with the classic stove that adorns all other pettifogging precincts. The pipes went diagonally across the room and entered the chimney, on the marble mantel-shelf of which were diverse bits of bread, triangles of Brie cheese, fresh pork-chops, glasses, bottles, and a cup of chocolate for the head-clerk. The smell of these comestibles amalgamated so well with the offensive odor of the over-heated stove and the peculiar exhalations of desks and papers that the stench of a fox would hardly have been perceived. The floor was covered with mud and snow brought in by the clerks. Near the window stood the rolling-top desk of the head-clerk, and next to it the little table of the second clerk. The latter was now on duty in the courts, where he usually went between eight and nine o'clock in the morning. The sole decorations of the office were the well-known large yellow posters which announce attachments on property, mortgagee-

sales, litigations between guardians and minors, and auctions, final or postponed, the glory of legal offices.

Behind the head-clerk, and covering the wall from top to bottom, was a case with an enormous number of pigeon-holes, each stuffed with bundles of papers, from which hung innumerable tags and those bits of red tape which give special character to legal documents. The lower shelves of the case were filled with paste-board boxes, yellowed by time and edged with blue paper, on which could be read the names of the more distinguished clients whose affairs were cooking at the present time. The dirty window-panes let in but a small amount of light; besides, in the month of February there are very few law-offices in Paris where the clerks can write without a lamp before ten o'clock in the day. Such offices are invariably neglected, and for the reason that while every one goes there nobody stays; no personal interest attaches to so mean a spot; neither the lawyers, nor the clients, nor the clerks, care for the appearance of the place which is to the latter a school, to the clients a means, to the master a laboratory. The greasy furniture is transmitted from lawyer to lawyer with such scrupulous exactness that certain offices still possess boxes of "residues," parchments engrossed in black-letter, and bags, which have descended from the solicitors of the "Chlet," an abbreviation of the word "Châtelet," an institution

which represented under the old order of things what a court of common pleas is in our day.

This dark office, choked with dust and dirt, was therefore, like all such offices, repulsive to clients, and one of the ugly monstrosities of Paris. Certainly, if the damp sacristies where prayers are weighed and paid for like spices, if the second-hand shops, where flutter rags which blight the illusions of life by revealing to us the end of our festive arrays, if these two sewers of poesy did not exist, a lawyer's office would be the most horrible of all social dens. But the same characteristic may be seen in gambling-houses, in court-rooms, in the lottery bureaus, and in evil resorts. Why? Perhaps because the drama played in such places within the soul renders men indifferent to externals, — a thought which likewise explains the simplicity of great thinkers and men of great ambitions.

“Where's my penknife?”

“I shall eat my breakfast.”

“Look out! there's a blot on the petition.”

“Hush, gentlemen!”

These various exclamations went off all at once just as the old client entered and closed the door, with the sort of humility which gives an unnatural air to the movements of a poverty-stricken man. The stranger tried to smile, but the muscles of his face relaxed when he had vainly looked for symptoms of civility

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on the inexorably indifferent faces of the six clerks. Accustomed, no doubt, to judge men, he addressed himself politely to the gutter-jumper, hoping that the office drudge might answer him civilly:—

“Monsieur, can I see your master?”

The mischievous youngster replied by tapping his ear with the fingers of his left hand, as much as to say, “I am deaf.”

“What is it you want, monsieur?” asked Godeschal swallowing an enormous mouthful as he asked the question, —brandishing his knife and crossing his legs till the foot of the upper one came on a line with his nose.

“I have called five times, monsieur,” replied the visitor; “I wish to speak to Monsieur Derville.”

“On business?”

“Yes; but I can explain my business only to him.”

“He’s asleep; if you wish to consult him you’ll have to come at night; he never gets to work before midnight. But if you will explain the matter to us we can perhaps do as well—”

The stranger was impassive. He looked humbly about him like a dog slipping into a strange kitchen and afraid of kicks. Thanks to their general condition, law-clerks are not afraid of thieves; so they felt no suspicion of the top-coat, but allowed him to look round in search of a seat, for he was evidently fatigued.

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It is a matter of calculation with lawyers to have few chairs in their offices. The common client, weary of standing, goes away grumbling.

“Monsieur,” replied the stranger, “I have already had the honor of telling you that I can explain my business to no one but Monsieur Derville. I will wait until he is up.”

Boucard had now finished his accounts. He smelt the fumes of his chocolate, left his cane chair, came up to the chimney, looked the old man over from head to foot, gazed at the top-coat and made an indescribable grimace. He probably thought that no matter how long they kept this client on the rack not a penny could be got out of him; and he now interposed, meaning with a few curt words to rid the office of an unprofitable client.

“They tell you the truth, monsieur,” he said; “Monsieur Derville works only at night. If your business is important I advise you to come back here at one or two in the morning.”

The client looked at the head-clerk with a stupid air, and remained for an instant motionless. Accustomed to see many changes of countenance, and many singular expressions produced by the hesitation and the dreaminess which characterize persons who go to law, the clerks took no notice of the old man, but continued to eat their breakfasts with as much noise of their jaws as if they were horses at a manger.

“Monsieur, I shall return to-night,” said the visitor, who, with the tenacity of an unhappy man, was determined to put his tormentors in the wrong.

The only retaliation granted to poverty is that of forcing justice and benevolence to unjust refusals. When unhappy souls have convicted society of falsehood then they fling themselves the more ardently upon the bosom of God.

“Did you ever see such a skull?” cried Simonnin, without waiting till the door had closed on the old man.

“He looks as if he had been buried and dug up again,” said one.

“He’s some colonel who wants his back-pay,” said the head-clerk.

“No, he’s an old porter.”

“Who’ll bet he’s a nobleman?” cried Boucard.

“I’ll bet he has been a porter,” said Godeschal. “None but porters are gifted by nature with top-coats as greasy and ragged round the bottom as that old fellow’s. Did n’t you notice his cracked boots which let in water, and that cravat in place of a shirt? That man slept last night under a bridge.”

“He may be a nobleman and have burnt his candle at both ends, — that’s nothing new!” cried Desroches.

“No,” replied Boucard, in the midst of merriment, “I maintain he was a brewer in 1789 and a colonel under the Republic.”

“Ha! I’ll bet tickets for a play all round that he never was a soldier,” said Godeschal.

“Done,” said Boucard.

“Monsieur, monsieur!” called the gutter-jumper, opening the window.

“What are you doing, Simonnin?” asked Boucard.

“I’m calling him back to know if he is a colonel or a porter, — he ought to know, himself.”

“What shall we say to him?” exclaimed Godeschal.

“Leave it to me,” said Boucard.

The poor man re-entered timidly, with his eyes lowered, perhaps not to show his hunger by looking too eagerly at the food.

“Monsieur,” said Boucard, “will you have the kindness to give us your name, so that Monsieur Derville may —”

“Chabert.”

“The colonel who was killed at Eylau?” asked Haré, who had not yet spoken, but was anxious to get in his joke like the rest.

“The same, monsieur,” answered the old man, with classic simplicity. Then he left the room.

“Thunder!”

“Sold!”

“Puff!”

“Oh!”

“Ah!”

“ Boum ! ”

“ The old oddity ! ”

“ Done for ! ”

“ Monsieur Desroches, you and I will go to the theatre for nothing ! ” cried Huré to the fourth clerk, with a rap on the shoulders fit to have killed a rhinoceros.

Then followed a chorus of shouts, laughs, and exclamations, to describe which we should have to use all the onomatopœias of the language.

“ Which theatre shall we choose ? ”

“ The Opera, ” said the head-clerk.

“ In the first place, ” said Godeschal, “ I never said theatre at all. I can take you, if I choose, to Madame Saqui. ”

“ Madame Saqui is not a play, ” said Desroches.

“ What ’s a play ? ” retorted Godeschal. “ Let ’s first establish the fact. What did I bet, gentlemen ? tickets for a play. What ’s a play ? a thing we go to see — ”

“ If that ’s so, you can take us to see the water running under the Pont Neuf, ” interrupted Simounin.

“ — see for money, ” went on Godeschal.

“ But you can see a great many things for money that are not plays. The definition is not exact, ” said Desroches.

“ But just listen to me — ”

“ You are talking nonsense, my dear fellow, ” said Boucard.

“Do you call Curtius a play?” asked Godeschal.

“No,” said the head-clerk, “I call it a gallery of wax figures.”

“I’ll bet a hundred francs to a sou,” retorted Godeschal, “that Curtius’s gallery constitutes a collection of things which may legally be called a play. They combine into one thing which can be seen at different prices according to the seats you occupy — ”

“You can’t get out of it!” said Simonnin.

“Take care I don’t box your ears!” said Godeschal.

The clerks all shrugged their shoulders.

“Besides, we don’t know that that old baboon wasn’t making fun of us,” he continued, changing his argument amid roars of laughter. “The fact is, Colonel Chabert is as dead as a door-nail; his widow married Comte Ferraud, councillor of state. Madame Ferraud is one of our clients.”

“The cause stands over for to-morrow,” said Boucard. “Come, get to work, gentlemen. Heavens and earth! nothing ever gets done here. Finish with that petition, — it has to be sent in before the session of the fourth court which meets to-day. Come, to work!”

“If it was really Colonel Chabert, would n’t he have kicked that little Simonnin when he pretended to be deaf?” said the provincial Huré, considering that observation quite as conclusive as those of Godeschal.

“Nothing is decided,” said Boucard. “Let us agree

to accept the second tier of boxes at the Français and see Talma in Nero. Simonnin can sit in the pit."

Thereupon the head-clerk sat down at his desk, and the others followed his example.

"*Rendered June one thousand eight hundred and fourteen* — Write it in letters, mind," said Godeschal.

"Have you written it?"

"Yes," replied the copyists and the engrosser, whose pens began to squeak along the stamped paper with a noise, well known in all law-offices, like that of scores of cockchafers tied by schoolboys in a paper bag.

"*And we pray that the gentlemen of this tribunal* — Hold on! let me read that sentence over to myself; I don't know what I'm about."

"Forty-six — should think that often happened — and three, forty-nine," said Boucard.

"*We pray,*" resumed Godeschal, having re-read his clause, "*that the gentlemen of this tribunal will not show less magnanimity than the august author of the ordinance, and that they will deny the miserable pretensions of the administration of the grand chancellor of the Legion of honor by determining the jurisprudence of this matter in the broad sense in which we have established it here* —"

"Monsieur Godeschal, don't you want a glass of water?" said the gutter-jumper.

"That imp of a Simonnin!" said Boucard. "Come

here, saddle your double-soled horses, and take this package and skip over to the Invalides."

"Which we have established it here —" went on Godeschal. "Did you get to that? Well, then add in the interests of *Madame* (full length) *la Vicomtesse de Grandlieu* —"

"What's that?" cried the head clerk, "the idea of petitioning in that affair! Vicomtesse de Grandlieu against the Legion of honor! Ah! you must be a fool! Have the goodness to put away your copies and your minute, — they'll answer for the Navarreins affair against the monasteries. It's late, and I must be off with the other petitions; I'll attend to that myself at the Palais."

Towards one o'clock in the morning the individual calling himself Colonel Chabert knocked at the door of Maître Derville, solicitor in the court of common pleas for the department of the Seine. The porter told him that Monsieur Derville had not yet come in. The old man declared he had an appointment and passed up to the rooms of the celebrated lawyer, who, young as he was, was even then considered one of the best legal heads in France. Having rung and been admitted, the persistent client was not a little astonished to find the head-clerk laying out on a table in the dining-room a number of documents relating to affairs which were to come up on the morrow. The clerk, not less astonished

at the apparition of the old man, bowed to the colonel and asked him to sit down, which he did.

“Upon my word, monsieur, I thought you were joking when you named such a singular hour for a consultation,” said the old man, with the factitious liveliness of a ruined man who tries to smile.

“The clerks were joking and telling the truth also,” said the head-clerk, going on with his work. “Monsieur Derville selects this hour to examine his causes, give directions for the suits, and plan his defences. His extraordinary intellect works freer at this hour, the only one in which he can get the silence and tranquillity he requires to evolve his ideas. You are the third person only who has been admitted here for a consultation at this time of night. After Monsieur Derville comes in he will talk over each affair, read everything connected with it, and spend perhaps five or six hours at his work; then he rings for me, and explains his intentions. In the morning, from ten to two, he listens to his clients; the rest of the day he passes in visiting. In the evening he goes about in society to keep up his relations with the great world. He has no other time than at night to delve into his cases, rummage the arsenals of the Code, make his plans of campaign. He is determined, out of love for his profession, not to lose a single case. And for that reason he won't take all that are brought to him, as

other lawyers do. That's his life; it's extraordinarily active. He makes a lot of money."

The old man was silent as he listened to this explanation, and his singular face assumed a look so devoid of all intelligence that the clerk after glancing at him once or twice took no further notice of him. A few moments later Derville arrived, in evening dress; his head-clerk opened the door to him and then went back to the papers. The young lawyer looked amazed when he saw in the dim light the strange client who awaited him. Colonel Chabert was as motionless as the wax figures of Curtius's gallery where Godeschal proposed to take his comrades. This immovability might have been less noticeable than it was, if it had not, as it were, completed the supernatural impression conveyed by the whole appearance of the man. The old soldier was lean and shrunken. The concealment of his forehead, which was carefully hidden beneath a wig brushed smoothly over it, gave a mysterious expression to his person. The eyes seemed covered with a film; you might have thought them bits of dirty mother-of-pearl, their bluish reflections quivering in the candle-light. The pale, livid, hatchet face, if I may borrow that term, seemed dead. An old black-silk stock was fastened round the neck. The shadow of the room hid the body so effectually below the dark line of the ragged article that a man of vivid imagination might have

taken that old head for a sketch drawn at random on the wall or for a portrait by Rembrandt without its frame. The brim of the hat worn by the strange old man cast a black line across the upper part of his face. This odd effect, though perfectly natural, brought out in abrupt contrast the white wrinkles, the stiffened lines, the unnatural hue of that cadaverous countenance. The absence of all motion in the body, all warmth in the glance, combined with a certain expression of mental alienation, and with the degrading symptoms which characterize idiocy, to give that face a nameless horror which no words can describe.

But an observer, and especially a lawyer, would have seen in that blasted man the signs of some deep anguish, indications of a misery that degraded that face as the drops of rain falling from the heavens on pure marble gradually disfigure it. A doctor, an author, a magistrate would have felt intuitively a whole drama as they looked at this sublime wreck, whose least merit was a resemblance to those fantastic sketches drawn by artists on the margins of their lithographic stones as they sit conversing with their friends.

When the stranger saw the lawyer he shuddered with the convulsive movement which seizes a poet when a sudden noise recalls him from some fecund revery amid the silence of the night. The old man rose quickly and took off his hat to the young lawyer. The

leather that lined it was no doubt damp with grease, for his wig stuck to it without his knowledge and exposed his skull, horribly mutilated and disfigured by a scar running from the crown of his head to the angle of his right eye and forming a raised welt. The sudden removal of that dirty wig, worn by the poor soul to conceal his wound, caused no desire to laugh in the minds of the two young men; so awful was the sight of that skull. "The mind fled through it!" was the first thought suggested to them as they saw that wound.

"If he is not Colonel Chabert he is some bold trooper," thought Boucard.

"Monsieur," said Derville, "to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"To Colonel Chabert."

"Which one?"

"The one who was killed at Eylau," replied the old man.

Hearing those extraordinary words the clerk and the lawyer looked at each other as if to say, "He is mad."

"Monsieur," said the colonel, "I desire to confide my secrets to you in private."

The intrepidity which characterizes lawyers is worthy of remark. Whether from their habit of receiving great numbers of persons, whether from an abiding sense of the protection of the law, or from perfect

confidence in their ministry, certain it is they go everywhere and take all risks, like priests and doctors. Derville made a sign to Boucard, who left the room.

“Monsieur,” said the lawyer, “during the day I am not very chary of my time; but in the middle of the night every moment is precious to me. Therefore, be brief and concise. Tell your facts without digression; I will ask you any explanations I may find necessary. Go on.”

Bidding his strange client be seated, the young man sat down before the table, and while listening to the tale of the late colonel he turned over the pages of a brief.

“Monsieur,” said the deceased, “perhaps you know that I commanded a regiment of cavalry at Eylau. I was the chief cause of the success of Murat’s famous charge which won the day. Unhappily for me, my death is given as an historic fact in ‘Victories and Conquests’ where all the particulars are related. We cut the three Russian lines in two; then they closed behind us and we were obliged to cut our way back again. Just before we reached the Emperor, having dispersed the Russians, a troop of the enemy’s cavalry met us. I flung myself upon them. Two Russian officers, actual giants, attacked me together. One of them cut me over the head with his sabre, which went through everything, even to the silk cap which I wore, and laid my

skull open. I fell from my horse. Murat came up to support us, and he and his whole party, fifteen hundred men, rode over me. They reported my death to the Emperor, who sent (for he loved me a little, the master!) to see if there were no hope of saving a man to whom he owed the vigor of our attack. He despatched two surgeons to find me and bring me in to the ambulances, saying — perhaps too hurriedly, for he had work to attend to — ‘Go and see if my poor Chabert is still living.’ Those cursed saw-bones had just seen me trampled under the hoofs of two regiments; no doubt they never took the trouble to feel my pulse, but reported me as dead. The certificate of my death was doubtless drawn up in due form of military law.”

Gradually, as he listened to his client, who expressed himself with perfect clearness, and related facts that were quite possible, though somewhat strange, the young lawyer pushed away his papers, rested his left elbow on the table, put his head on his hand, and looked fixedly at the colonel.

“Are you aware, monsieur,” he said, “that I am the solicitor of the Countess Ferraud, widow of Colonel Chabert?”

“Of my wife? Yes, monsieur. And therefore, after many fruitless efforts to obtain a hearing from lawyers, who all thought me mad, I determined to come to you. I shall speak of my sorrows later. Allow me now to

state the facts, and explain to you how they probably happened, rather than how they actually did happen. Certain circumstances, which can never be known except to God Almighty, oblige me to relate much in the form of hypotheses. I must tell you, for instance, that the wounds I received probably produced something like lockjaw, or threw me into a state analogous to a disease called, I believe, catalepsy. Otherwise, how can I suppose that I was stripped of my clothing and flung into a common grave, according to the customs of war, by the men whose business it was to bury the dead? Here let me state a circumstance which I only knew much later than the event which I am forced to call my death. In 1814 I met in Stuttgard an old cavalry sergeant of my regiment. That dear man — the only human being willing to recognize me, of whom I will presently speak to you — explained to me the extraordinary circumstances of my preservation. He said that my horse received a bullet in the body at the same moment when I myself was wounded. Horse and rider were therefore knocked over together like a stand of muskets. In turning, either to the right or to the left, I had doubtless been protected by the body of my horse which saved me from being crushed by the riders or hit by bullets.”

The old man paused for a moment as if to collect himself and then resumed: —

“ When I came to myself, monsieur, I was in a place and in an atmosphere of which I could give you no idea, even if I talked for days. The air I breathed was mephitic. I tried to move but I found no space. My eyes were open but I saw nothing. The want of air was the worst sign, and it showed me the dangers of my position. I felt I was in some place where the atmosphere was stagnant, and that I should die of it. This thought overcame the sense of extreme pain which had brought me to my senses. My ears hummed violently. I heard, or thought I heard (for I can affirm nothing), groans from the heap of dead bodies among whom I lay. Though the recollection of those moments is dark, though my memory is confused, and in spite of still greater sufferings which I experienced later and which have bewildered my ideas, there are nights, even now, when I think I hear those smothered moans. But there was something more horrible than even those cries, — a silence that I have never known elsewhere, the silence of the grave. At last, raising my hands and feeling for the dead, I found a void between my head and the human carrion about me. I could even measure the space thus left to me by some mere chance, the cause of which I did not know. It seemed as if, thanks to the carelessness or to the haste with which we had been flung pell-mell into the trench, that two dead bodies had fallen across each other above me, so as to form an

angle like that of two cards which children lay together to make houses. Quickly feeling in all directions, — for I had no time to idle, — I happily came across an arm, the arm of a Hercules, detached from its body; and those good bones saved me! Without that unlooked-for succor I must have perished. But now, with a fury you will readily understand, I began to work my way upward through the bodies which separated me from the layer of earth hastily flung over us, — I say ‘us,’ as though there were others living. I worked with a will, monsieur, for here I am! Still, I don’t know to-day how it was that I managed to tear through the covering of flesh that lay between me and life. I had, as it were, three arms. That Herculean crow-bar, which I used carefully, brought me a little air confined among the bodies which it helped me to displace, and I economized my breathing. At last I saw daylight, but through the snow, monsieur! Just then I noticed for the first time that my head was cut open. Happily, my blood — that of my comrades, possibly, how should I know? or the bleeding flesh of my horse — had coagulated on my wound and formed a natural plaster. But in spite of that scab I fainted when my head came in contact with the snow. The little heat still left in my body melted the snow about me, and when I came to myself my head was in the middle of a little opening, through which I shouted as long as I was able. But

the sun had risen and I was little likely to be heard. People seemed already in the fields. I raised myself to my feet, making stepping-stones of the dead whose thighs were solid, — for it was n't the moment to stop and say, 'Honor to heroes!'

“In short, monsieur,” continued the old man, who had stopped speaking for a moment, “after going through the anguish — if that word describes the rage — of seeing those cursed Germans, ay, many of them, run away when they heard the voice of a man they could not see. I was at last taken from my living grave by a woman, daring enough or inquisitive enough to come close to my head, which seemed to grow from the ground like a mushroom. The woman fetched her husband, and together they took me to their poor hovel. It seems that there I had a return of catalepsy, — allow me that term with which to describe a state of which I have no idea, but which I judge, from what my hosts told me, must have been an effect of that disease. I lay for six months between life and death, not speaking, or wandering in mind when I did speak. At last my benefactors placed me in the hospital at Heilsberg. Of course you understand, monsieur, that I issued from my grave as naked as I came from my mother's womb; so that when, many months later, I remembered that I was Colonel Chabert, and endeavored to make my nurses treat me with more respect than if I were a

poor devil of a private, all the men in the ward laughed. Happily for me, the surgeon made it a point of honor or vanity to cure me; and he naturally became interested in his patient. When I spoke to him in a connected manner of my former life, that good man (his name was Sparchmann) had my statements recorded in the legal forms of his country, also a statement of the miraculous manner in which I had escaped from the trench, and the day and hour my benefactress and her husband had rescued me, together with the nature and exact position of my wounds and a careful description of my person. Well, monsieur, I do not possess a single one of those important papers, nor the declaration I made before a notary at Heilsberg to establish my identity. The events of the war drove us from the town, and from that day I have wandered like a vagabond, begging my bread, treated as a lunatic when I told my story, unable to earn a single sou that would enable me to send for those papers, which alone can prove the truth of what I say and restore me to my social status. Often my physical sufferings have kept me for weeks and months in some obscure country town, where the greatest kindness has been shown to the sick Frenchman, but where they laughed in his face when he asserted he was Colonel Chabert. For a long while such doubts and laughter made me furious, and that injured my cause, and once I was shut up as a madman

at Stuttgart. You can imagine, from what I have told you, that there were reasons to lock me up. After two years in a madhouse, where I was forced to hear my keepers say: 'This poor man fancies he was once Colonel Chabert,' to visitors, who replied compassionately, 'Ah, poor man!' I myself was convinced of the impossibility of my story being true; I grew sad, resigned, tranquil, and I ceased to call myself Colonel Chabert, so as to get my release and return to France. Oh, monsieur! to see Paris once more! it was a joy I —"

With those unfinished words Colonel Chabert sank into a reverie, which the lawyer did not disturb.

"Monsieur," resumed the client presently, "one fine day, a spring day, they gave me my freedom and ten thalers, on the ground that I talked sensibly on all subjects and had given up calling myself Colonel Chabert; and, God knows, at that time my name was disagreeable to me, and has been at intervals ever since. I would like not to be myself; the sense of my rights kills me. If my illness had only taken from me forever the remembrance of my past existence, I might be happy. I might have re-entered the service under some other name; and, who knows? perhaps I should have ended as a Russian or an Austrian field-marshal."

"Monsieur," said the lawyer, "you have upset all my ideas; I fancy I dream as I listen to you. Let us pause here for a moment, I beg of you."

“You are the only person,” said the colonel sadly, “who have ever listened to me patiently. No lawyer has been willing to lend me ten napoleons, that I might send to Germany for the papers necessary for my suit.”

“What suit?” asked the lawyer, who had forgotten the unfortunate present position of his client, as he listened to the recital of his past misery.

“Why, monsieur, you are well aware that the Comtesse Ferraud is my wife. She possesses an income of thirty thousand francs which belongs to me, and she refuses to give me one penny of it. When I tell this to lawyers and to men of common-sense, when I, a beggar, propose to sue a count and countess, when I, risen from the dead, deny the proofs of my death, they put me off, — they refuse to listen to me, either with that coldly polite air with which you lawyers know so well how to rid yourselves of hapless creatures, or brutally, as men do when they think they are dealing with a swindler or a madman. I have been buried beneath the dead, but now I am buried beneath the living, — beneath facts, beneath records, beneath society itself, which seeks to thrust me back underground!”

“Monsieur, have the goodness to sue, to prosecute now,” said the lawyer.

“Have the goodness! Ah!” exclaimed the unfortunate old man, taking the hand of the young lawyer; “that is the first polite word I have heard since —”

He wept. Gratitude stifled his voice. The all-penetrative, indescribable eloquence of look, gesture, — even silence, — clinched Derville's conviction, and touched him keenly.

“Listen to me, monsieur,” he said. “I won three hundred francs at cards to-night; I can surely afford to give half that sum to procure the happiness of a man. I will make all the investigations and orders necessary to obtain the papers you mention; and, until their arrival, I will allow you five francs a day. If you are Colonel Chabert, you will know how to pardon the smallness of the loan offered by a young man who has his fortune to make. Continue.”

The self-styled colonel remained for an instant motionless, and as if stupefied; his great misfortunes had, perhaps, destroyed his powers of belief. If he were seeking to recover his illustrious military fame, his home, his fortune, — himself, in short, — it may have been only in obedience to that inexplicable feeling, that germ in the hearts of all men, to which we owe the researches of the alchemists, the passion for glory, the discoveries of astronomy and of physics, — all that urges a man to magnify himself by the magnitude of the facts or the ideas that are a part of him. The *ego* was now but a secondary consideration to his mind, just as the vanity of triumph or the satisfaction of gain are dearer to a man who bets than the object of his

wager. The words of the young lawyer came, therefore, like a miracle to this man, repudiated for the last ten years by wife, by justice, by the whole social creation. To receive from a lawyer those ten gold pieces so long denied him, by so many persons, in so many ways! The colonel was like the lady who had been ill so long, that when she was cured she thought she was suffering from a new malady. There are joys in which we no longer believe; they come, and we find them thunderbolts, — they blast us. So now the poor man's gratitude was so deep that he could not utter it. He might have seemed cold to a superficial mind, but Derville saw integrity in that very stupor. A swindler would have spoken.

“Where was I?” said the colonel, with the guilelessness of a child or a soldier; for there is much of the child in the true soldier, and nearly always something of a soldier in a child, especially in France.

“At Stuttgart; they had set you at liberty.”

“You know my wife?” asked the colonel.

“Yes,” replied Derville, with a nod of his head.

“How is she?”

“Always fascinating.”

The old man made a gesture with his hand, and seemed to conquer some secret pang with the grave and solemn resignation that characterizes men who have been tried in the fire and blood of battle-fields.

“Monsieur,” he said, with a sort of gayety; for he breathed anew, poor soul; he had issued a second time from the grave; he had broken through a crust of ice and snow harder to melt than that which once had frozen his wounded head; he inhaled the air as though he were just issuing from a dungeon. “Monsieur,” he said, “if I were a handsome fellow I should n’t be where I am now. Women believe men when they lard their sentences with words of love. Then they’ll fetch and carry, and come and go, and do anything to serve you. They’ll intrigue; they’ll swear to facts; they’ll play the devil for the man they love. But how could I make a woman listen to one like me? With a face like a death’s head, and clothed like a sans-culotte, I was more of an Esquimau than a Frenchman, — I, who in 1799 was the finest coxcomb in the service! — I, Chabert, count of the Empire! At last the day came when I knew I was an outcast on the streets, like a pariah dog. That day I met the sergeant I told you of; his name was Boutin. That poor devil and I made the finest pair of broken-down old brutes I have ever seen. I met him, and recognized him; but he couldn’t even guess who I was. We went into a tavern. When I told him my name his mouth split open with a roar of laughter like a burst mortar. Monsieur, that laugh is among the bitterest of my sorrows. It revealed, without disguise, the changes there were in me. I saw

myself unrecognizable, even to the humblest and most grateful of my friends; for I had once saved Boutin's life, though that was a return for something I owed him. I need n't tell you the whole story; the thing happened in Italy, at Ravenna. The house where Boutin saved me from being stabbed was none too decent. At that time I was not colonel, only a trooper, like Boutin. Happily, there were circumstances in the affair known only to him and me; when I reminded him of them, his incredulity lessened. Then I told him the story of my extraordinary fate. Though my eyes and my voice were, he told me, strangely altered; though I had neither hair, nor teeth, nor eyebrows, and was as white as an albino, he did finally recognize his old colonel in the beggar before him, after putting a vast number of questions to which I answered triumphantly.

“Ah!” went on the old soldier, after a moment's pause, “he told me his adventures too, and they were hardly less extraordinary than mine. He was just back from the borders of China, to which he had escaped from Siberia. He told me of the disasters of the Russian campaign and Napoleon's first abdication; that news was another of my worst pangs. We were two strange wrecks drifting over the globe, as the storms of ocean drift the pebbles from shore to shore. We had each seen Egypt, Syria, Spain, Russia, Holland, Germany, Italy, Dalmatia, England, China, Tartary, Si-

beria; nothing was left for us to know but the Indies and America. Boutin, who was more active on his legs than I, agreed to go to Paris as quickly as he could, and tell my wife the state in which I was. I wrote a long and detailed letter to Madame Chabert; it was the fourth I had written her. Monsieur, if I had had relatives of my own, the thing could not have happened; but, I must tell you plainly, I was a foundling, a soldier whose patrimony was his courage, the world his family, France his country, God his sole protector, — no! I am wrong; I had a father, — the Emperor! Ah! if he, dear man, were still among us; if he saw ‘his Chabert,’ as he called me, in such a plight, he would be furious. But what’s to be done? our sun has set; we are all left out in the cold! After all, political events might be the reason of my wife’s silence; at least I thought so. Boutin departed. He was lucky, *he* was, poor fellow! he had two white bears who danced and kept him in food. I could not accompany him; my pains were so great I could not go long distances. I wept when we parted, having walked as far as I had strength with the bears and him. At Carlsruhe I was taken with neuralgia in my head, and lay six weeks in the straw of an inn barn.

“Ah! monsieur,” continued the unhappy man, “there is no end to what I might tell you of my miserable life. Moral anguish, before which all physical sufferings are

as nought, excites less pity because it is not seen. I remember weeping before a mansion in Strasburg where I once gave a ball, and where they now refused me a crust of bread. Having agreed with Boutin as to the road I should follow, I went to every post-office on my way expecting to find a letter and some money. I reached Paris at last without a line. Despair was in my heart! Boutin must be dead, I thought; and I was right; the poor fellow died at Waterloo, as I heard later and accidentally. His errand to my wife was no doubt fruitless. Well, I reached Paris just as the Cossacks entered it. To me, that was grief upon grief. When I saw those Russians in France I no longer remembered that I had neither shoes on my feet nor money in my pocket. Yes, monsieur, my clothes were literally in shreds. The evening of my arrival I was forced to bivouac in the woods of Claye. The chilliness of the night gave me a sort of illness, I hardly know what it was, which seized me as I was crossing the faubourg Saint-Martin. I fell, half-unconscious, close by the door of an ironmonger. When I came to my senses I was in a bed at the Hôtel-Dieu. There I stayed a month in some comfort; then I was discharged. I had no money, but I was cured and I had my feet on the blessed pavements of Paris. With what joy and speed I made my way to the rue du Mont-Blanc, where I supposed my wife was living in my

house. Bah! the rue du Mont-Blanc had become the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. My house was no longer standing; it was pulled down. Speculators had built houses in my gardens. Not knowing that my wife had married Monsieur Ferraud, I could hear nothing of her. At last I went to an old lawyer who formerly took charge of my affairs. The good man was dead, and his office had passed into the hands of a younger man. The latter informed me, to my great astonishment, of the settlement of my estate, the marriage of my wife, and the birth of her two children. When I told him that I was Colonel Chabert, he laughed so loudly in my face that I turned and left him without a word. My detention at Stuttgart made me mindful of Charenton, and I resolved to act prudently. Then, monsieur, knowing where my wife lived, I made my way to the house — “Ah!” cried the colonel, with a gesture of intense anger, “I was not received when I gave a borrowed name, but when I sent in my own I was turned out of the house! I have stood night after night leaning against the buttress of her porte-cochère to see her returning from a ball or from the theatre. I have plunged my eyes into that carriage where I could see the woman who is mine and who is not mine! Oh! from that day I have lived for vengeance,” cried the old man, in a hollow voice, standing suddenly erect in front of Derville. “She knows I am living; she has received three letters which

I have written to her since my return. She loves me no longer! I—I don't know if I love her or if I hate her; I long for her and I curse her by turns! She owes her prosperity and all her happiness to me, and she denies me even the meanest succor! Sometimes I don't know where to turn!"

The old man fell back into a chair, motionless and silent. Derville too was silent, contemplating his client.

"The matter is serious," he said at last in a mechanical way. "Even admitting the authenticity of the papers which ought to be found at Heilsberg, it is not clear that we can establish our case, — certainly not at once. The suit will have to go before three courts. I must reflect at my leisure over such a case. It is exceptional."

"Oh!" replied the colonel, coldly, lifting his head with a proud gesture, "if I am compelled to succumb, I can die, — but not alone."

With the words the old man seemed to vanish; the eyes of the man of energy shone with the fires of desire and vengeance.

"Perhaps we shall have to compromise," said the lawyer.

"Compromise!" repeated Colonel Chabert. "Am I dead, or am I living?"

"Monsieur," said the lawyer, "you will, I hope,

follow my advice. Your cause shall be my cause. You will soon, I trust, see the true interest I take in your situation, which is almost without precedent in legal annals. Meantime let me give you an order on my notary, who will remit you fifty francs every ten days on your receipt. It is not desirable that you should come here for this money. If you are Colonel Chabert you ought not to be beholden to any one. I shall make these advances in the form of a loan. You have property to recover; you are a rich man."

This last delicate consideration for his feelings brought tears from the old man's eyes. Derville rose abruptly, for assuredly it is not the thing for a lawyer to show feeling; he went into his private study and returned presently with an unsealed letter, which he gave to Colonel Chabert. When the old man took it he felt two gold pieces within the paper.

"Tell me precisely what the papers are; give me the exact name of the town and kingdom," said the lawyer.

The colonel dictated the necessary information and corrected the spelling of the names. Then he took his hat in one hand, looked at Derville, offered him the other hand, a horny hand, and said in a simple way, —

"After the Emperor you are the man to whom I owe most. You are a noble man."

The lawyer clasped the colonel's hand, and went with him to the stairway to light him down.

"Boucard," said the lawyer to his head-clerk, whom he summoned, "I have just heard a tale which may cost me some money. If I am deceived I shall never regret what I pay, for I shall have seen the greatest comedian of our time."

"When the colonel reached the street, he stopped under a lamp, drew the two pieces of twenty francs each from the letter which the lawyer had given him, and looked at them for a moment in the dim light. He saw gold for the first time in nine years.

"I can smoke cigars," he said to himself.

About three months after the nocturnal consultation of Colonel Chabert with Derville, the notary whom the latter had directed to pay the stipend he allowed to his singular client went to the lawyer's office one day to confer on some important matter, and opened the conversation by asking for the six hundred francs he had already paid to the old soldier.

"Do you find it amusing to support the old army?" said the notary, laughing. His name was Crottat, — a young man who had just bought a practice in which he was head-clerk, the master of which, a certain Roguin, had lately absconded after a frightful failure.

"Thank you, my dear fellow, for reminding me of

that affair," replied Derville. "My philanthropy does not go beyond twenty-five louis; I fear I have been the dupe of my patriotism."

As Derville uttered the words his eyes lighted on a packet of papers the head-clerk had laid upon his desk. His attention was drawn to one of the letters by the postmarks, oblong, square, and triangular, and red and blue stamped upon it in the Prussian, Austrian, Bavarian, and French post-offices.

"Ah!" said he, laughing, "here's the conclusion of the comedy; now we shall see if I have been taken in."

He took up the letter and opened it, but was unable to read a word, for it was in German.

"Boucard!" he called, opening the door and holding out the letter to his head-clerk, "go yourself and get that letter translated, and come back with it as fast as you can."

The Berlin notary to whom Derville had written now replied by informing the latter that the papers he had asked for would reach him a few days after this letter of advice. They were all, he said, perfectly regular, and were fully certified with the necessary legal forms. He added, moreover, that nearly all the witnesses to the facts were still living, and that the woman to whom *Monsieur le Comte Chabert* owed his life could be found in a certain suburb of Heilsberg.

"It is getting serious," said Derville, when Boucard

had told him the substance of the letter. "But see here, my dear fellow, I want some information which I am sure you must have in your office. When that old swindler of a Roguin —"

"We say 'the unfortunate Roguin,'" said Crottat, laughing, as he interrupted Derville.

"Well — when that unfortunate Roguin ran off with eight hundred thousand francs of his clients' money and reduced many families to pauperism, what was done about the Chabert property? It seems to me I have seen something about it among our Ferraud papers."

"Yes," replied Crottat, "I was third clerk at the time, and I remember copying and studying the documents. Rose Chapotel, wife and widow of Hyacinthe, called Chabert, count of the Empire, grand officer of the Legion of honor. They had married without a contract and therefore they held their property in common. As far as I can recollect, the assets amounted to about six hundred thousand francs. Before his marriage Comte Chabert had made a will leaving one fourth of the property of which he might die possessed to the Parisian hospitals; the State inherited another fourth. There was an auction sale and a distribution of the property, for the lawyers made good speed with the affair. Upon the settlement of the estate the monster who then ruled France made a decree restoring the

amount which had gone to the Treasury to the colonel's widow."

"So that Comte Chabert's individual property," said Derville, "does not amount to more than three hundred thousand francs?"

"Just that, old man," said Crottat; "you solicitors do occasionally get things right, — though some people accuse you of arguing just as well against as for the truth."

Comte Chabert, whose address was written at the foot of the first receipt he had given to the notary, lived in the faubourg Saint-Marceau, rue du Petit-Banquier, with an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard named Vergniaud, now a cow-keeper. When Derville reached the place he was obliged to go on foot to find his client, for his groom positively refused to drive through an unpaved street the ruts of which were deep enough to break the wheels of a cabriolet. Looking about him on all sides, the lawyer at length discovered at the end of the street nearest to the boulevard and between two walls built of bones and mud, two shabby rough stone pillars, much defaced by wheels in spite of wooden posts placed in front of them. These pillars supported a beam covered with a tiled hood, on which, painted red, were the words, "VERGNIAUD, COW-KEEPER." To the right of the name was a cow, and to the left eggs, all painted white. The gate was open.

At the farther end of a good-sized yard and opposite to the gate stood the house, if indeed that name rightfully belongs to one of those hovels built in the suburbs of Paris, the squalor of which cannot be matched elsewhere, not even in the most wretched of country huts; for they have all the poverty of the latter without their poetry. In fact, a cabin in the open country has the charm that pure air, verdure, the meadow vistas, a hill, a winding road, creepers, evergreen hedges, a mossy roof and rural implements can give to it; but in Paris poverty is heightened only by horrors. Though recently built, the house seemed tumbling to ruins. None of its materials were originally destined for it; they came from the "demolitions" which are daily events in Paris. On a shutter made of an old sign Derville read the words "Fancy-articles." No two of the windows were alike, and all were placed hap-hazard. The ground-floor, which seemed to be the habitable part of the hovel, was raised from the earth on one side, while on the other the rooms were sunk below a bank. Between the gate and the house was a slough of manure, into which flowed the rain-water and the drainage from the house. The wall upon which this rickety building rested was surrounded by hutches in which rabbits brought forth their numerous young. To the right of the gate was the cow-shed, which communicated with the house through a dairy, and over it the hay-loft.

To the left was a poultry-yard, a stable, and a pigsty, all of which were finished off, like the house, with shabby planks of white-wood nailed one above the other and filled in with rushes. Like most of the purliens whence the elements of the grand dinners daily eaten in Paris are derived, the yard in which Derville now stood showed signs of the haste required for the prompt filling of orders. The great tin cans in which the milk was carried, the smaller cans with their linen stoppers which contained the cream, were tossed higgledy-piggledy in front of the dairy. The rags used to wipe them out were hanging in the sun to dry, on lines fastened to hooks. The steady horse, of a race extinct except among milk-dealers, had walked a few steps away from the cart and stood in front of the stable, the door of which was locked. A goat browsed upon the spindling, powdery vine-shoots which crept along the cracked and yellow walls of the house. A cat was creeping among the cream-cans and licking the outside of them. The hens, scared at Derville's advent, scuttled away cackling, and the watch-dog barked.

“The man who decided the victory of Eylau lives here!” thought Derville, taking in at a glance the whole of this squalid scene.

The house seemed to be under the guardianship of three little ragamuffins. One, who had clambered to the top of a cart laden with green fodder, was throwing

stones down the chimney of the next house, probably hoping that they would fall into the saucepans below; another was trying to lead a pig up the floor of a tip-cart, one end of which touched the ground, while the third, hanging on to the other end, was waiting till the pig was fairly in to tip the cart up again. When Derville asked if that was where Monsieur Chabert lived none of them answered; and all three gazed at him with lively stupidity, — if it is allowable to unite those words. Derville repeated his question without result. Provoked at the saucy air of the little scamps, he spoke sharply, in a tone which young men think they can use to children, and the boys broke silence with a roar of laughter. Derville was angry. The colonel, who heard the noise, came out of a little room near the dairy and stood on the sill of his door with the imperturbable phlegm of a military training. In his mouth was a pipe in process of being “colored,” — one of those humble pipes of white clay with short stems called “muzzle-scorchers.” He raised the peak of a cap which was horribly greasy, saw Derville, and came across the manure heap in haste to meet his benefactor, calling out in a friendly tone to the boys, “Silence, in the ranks!” The children became instantly and respectfully silent, showing the power the old soldier had over them.

“Why haven’t you written to me?” he said to Der-

ville. "Go along by the cow-house; see, the yard is paved on that side," he cried, noticing the hesitation of the young lawyer, who did not care to set his feet in the wet manure.

Jumping from stone to stone, Derville at last reached the door through which the colonel had issued. Chabert seemed annoyed at the necessity of receiving him in the room he was occupying. In fact, there was only one chair. The colonel's bed was merely a few bundles of straw on which his landlady had spread some ragged bits of old carpet, such as milk-women lay upon the seats of their wagons, and pick up, heaven knows where. The floor was neither more nor less than the earth beaten hard. Such dampness exuded from the nitrified walls, greenish in color and full of cracks, that the side where the colonel slept had been covered with a mat made of reeds. The top-coat was hanging to a nail. Two pairs of broken boots lay in a corner. Not a vestige of under-clothing was seen. The "Bulletins of the Grand Army," reprinted by Plancher, was lying open on a mouldy table, as if constantly read by the colonel, whose face was calm and serene in the midst of this direful poverty. His visit to Derville seemed to have changed the very character of his features, on which the lawyer now saw traces of happy thought, the special gleam which hope had cast.

"Does the smoke of a pipe annoy you?" he asked,

offering the one chair, and that half-denuded of straw.

“But colonel, you are shockingly ill-lodged here!”

The words were wrung from Derville by the natural distrust of lawyers, caused by the deplorable experience that comes to them so soon from the dreadful, mysterious dramas in which they are called professionally to take part.

“That man,” thought Derville to himself, “has no doubt spent my money in gratifying the three cardinal virtues of a trooper, — wine, women, and cards.

“True enough, monsieur; we don’t abound in luxury. It is a bivouac, tempered, as you may say, by friendship; but” (here the soldier cast a searching look at the lawyer) “I have done wrong to no man, I have repulsed no man, and I sleep in peace.”

Derville felt there would be a want of delicacy in asking his client to account for his use of the money he had lent him, so he merely said: “Why don’t you come into Paris, where you could live just as cheaply as you do here, and be much better off?”

“Because,” replied the colonel, “the good, kind people I am with took me in and fed me gratis for a year, and how could I desert them the moment I got a little money? Besides, the father of these young scamps is an Egyptian.”

“An Egyptian?”

“That’s what we call the troopers who returned from the expedition to Egypt, in which I took part. Not only are we all brothers in heart, but Vergniaud was in my regiment; he and I shared the water of the desert. Besides, I want to finish teaching those little monkeys to read.”

“He might give you a better room for your money,” said the lawyer.

“Bah!” said the colonel, “the children sleep as I do on straw. He and his wife have no better bed themselves. They are very poor, you see; they have more of an establishment here than they can manage. But if I get back my fortune — Well, enough!”

“Colonel, I expect to receive your papers from Heilsberg to-morrow; your benefactress is still living.”

“Oh! cursed money! to think I have n’t any!” cried the colonel, flinging down his pipe.

A “colored” pipe is a precious pipe to a smoker; but the action was so natural and so generous that all smokers would have forgiven him that act of leze-tobacco; the angels might have picked up the pieces.

“Colonel, your affair is very complicated,” said Derville, leaving the room to walk up and down in the sun before the house.

“It seems to me,” said the soldier, “perfectly simple. They thought me dead, and here I am! Give me back my wife and my property; give me the rank

of general, — to which I have a right, for I had passed colonel in the Imperial Guard the night before the battle of Eylau.”

“Matters are not managed that way in law,” said Derville. “Listen to me. You are Comte Chabert, — I’ll admit that; but the thing is to prove it legally against those persons whose interest it is to deny your existence. All your papers and documents will be disputed; and the very first discussions will open a dozen or more preliminary questions. Every step will be fought over up to the supreme court. All that will involve expensive suits, which will drag along, no matter how much energy I put into them. Your adversaries will demand an inquiry, which we cannot refuse, and which will perhaps necessitate sending a commission to Prussia. But suppose all went well, and you were promptly and legally recognized as Colonel Chabert, what then? Do we know how the question of Madame Ferraud’s innocent bigamy would be decided? Here’s a case where the question of rights is outside of the Code, and can be decided by the judges only under the laws of conscience, as a jury does in many delicate cases which social perversities bring up in criminal courts. Now, here’s a point: you had no children by your marriage, and Monsieur Ferraud has two; the judges may annul the marriage where the ties are weakest, in favor of a marriage which involves the

well-being of children, admitting that the parents married in good faith. Would it be a fine or moral position for you, at your age, and under these circumstances, to insist on having — will ye, nill ye — a wife who no longer loves you? You would have against you a husband and wife who are powerful and able to bring influence upon the judges. The case has many elements of duration in it. You may spend years and grow an old man still struggling with the sharpest grief and anxiety.”

“ But my property? ”

“ You think you have a large fortune? ”

“ I had an income of thirty thousand francs.”

“ My dear colonel, in 1799, before your marriage, you made a will leaving a quarter of your whole property to the hospitals.”

“ That is true.”

“ Well, you were supposed to be dead; then of course an inventory of your property was made and the whole wound up in order to give that fourth part to the said hospitals. Your wife had no scruples about cheating the poor. The inventory, in which she took care not to mention the cash on hand or her jewelry, or the full amount of the silver, and in which the furniture was appraised at two-thirds below its real value (either to please her or to lessen the treasury tax, for appraisers are liable for the amount of their valuations), —

this inventory, I say, gave your property as amounting to six hundred thousand francs. Your widow had a legal right to half. Everything was sold and bought in by her; she gained on the whole transaction, and the hospitals got their seventy-five thousand francs. Then, as the Treasury inherited the rest of your property (for you had not mentioned your wife in your will), the Emperor made a decree returning the portion which reverted to the Treasury to your widow. Now, then, the question is, to what have you any legal right? — to three hundred thousand francs only, less costs.”

“ You call that justice ? ” said the colonel, thunder-struck.

“ Of course.”

“ Fine justice ! ”

“ It is always so, my poor colonel. You see now that what you thought so easy is not easy at all. Madame Ferrand may also try to keep the portion the Emperor returned to her.”

“ But she was not a widow, and therefore the decree was null.”

“ I admit that. But everything can be argued. Listen to me. Under these circumstances, I think a compromise is the best thing both for you and for her. You could get a larger sum that way than by asserting your rights.”

“ It would be selling my wife ! ”

“With an income of twenty-four thousand francs you would be in a position to find another who would suit you better and make you happier. I intend to go and see the Comtesse Ferraud to-day, and find out how the land lies; but I did not wish to take that step without letting you know.”

“We will go together.”

“Dressed as you are?” said the lawyer. “No, no, colonel, no! You might lose your case.”

“Can I win it?”

“Yes, under all aspects,” answered Derville. “But my dear Colonel Chabert, there is one thing you pay no heed to. I am not rich, and my practice is not yet wholly paid for. If the courts should be willing to grant you a provisional maintenance they will only do so after recognizing your claims as Colonel Chabert, grand officer of the Legion of honor.”

“So I am!” said the old man, naively, “grand officer of the Legion of honor, — I had forgotten that.”

“Well, as I was saying,” resumed Derville, “till then you will have to bring suits, pay lawyers, serve writs, employ sheriffs, and live. The cost of those preliminary steps will amount to more than twelve or even fifteen thousand francs. I can’t lend you the money for I am crushed by the enormous interest I am forced to pay to those who lent me money to buy my practice. Where, then, can you get it?”

Big tears fell from the faded eyes of the old soldier and rolled down his cheeks. The sight of these difficulties discouraged him. The social and judicial world lay upon his breast like a nightmare.

“ I will go to the column of the place Vêndome,” he said, “ and cry aloud, ‘ I am Colonel Chabert, who broke the Russian square at Eylau!’ The man of iron up there — ah! he’ll recognize me!”

“ They would put you in Charenton.”

At that dreaded name the soldier’s courage fell.

“ Perhaps I should have a better chance at the ministry of war,” he said.

“ In a government office? Well, try it,” said Derville. “ But you must take with you a legal judgment declaring your death disproved. The government would prefer to get rid of the Empire people.”

The colonel remained for a moment speechless, motionless, gazing before him and seeing nothing, plunged in a bottomless despair. Military justice is prompt and straight-forward; it decides peremptorily, and is generally fair; this was the only justice Chabert knew. Seeing the labyrinth of difficulty which lay before him, and knowing that he had no money with which to enter it, the poor soldier was mortally wounded in that particular power of human nature which we call *will*. He felt it was impossible for him to live in a legal struggle; far easier to his nature was it to stay poor and a beg-

gar, or to enlist in some cavalry regiment if they would still take him. Physical and mental suffering had vitiated his body in some of its important organs. He was approaching one of those diseases for which the science of medicine has no name, the seat of which is, in a way, movable (like the nervous system which is the part of our machinery most frequently attacked), an affection which we must fain call "the spleen of sorrow." However serious this invisible but most real disease might be, it was still curable by a happy termination of his griefs. To completely unhinge and destroy that vigorous organization some final blow was needed, some unexpected shock which might break the weakened springs and produce those strange hesitations, those vague, incomplete, and inconsequent actions which physiologists notice in all persons wrecked by grief.

Observing symptoms of deep depression in his client, Derville hastened to say: "Take courage; the issue of the affair must be favorable to you in some way or other. Only, examine your own mind and see if you can place implicit trust in me, and accept blindly the course that I shall think best for you."

"Do what you will," said Chabert.

"Yes, but will you surrender yourself to me completely, like a man marching to his death?"

"Am I to live without a status and without a name? Is that bearable?"

“I don't mean that,” said the lawyer. “We will bring an amicable suit to annul the record of your decease, and also your marriage; then you will resume your rights. You could even be, through Comte Ferraud's influence, restored to the army with the rank of general, and you would certainly obtain a pension.”

“Well, go on, then,” replied Chabert; “I trust implicitly to you.”

“I will send you a power-of-attorney to sign,” said Derville. “Adieu, keep up your courage; if you want money let me know.”

Chabert wrung the lawyer's hand, and stood with his back against the wall, unable to follow him except with his eyes. During this conference the face of a man had every now and then looked round one of the gate pillars, behind which its owner was posted waiting for Derville's departure. The man now accosted the young lawyer. He was old, and he wore a blue jacket, a pleated white smock like those worn by brewers, and on his head a cap of otter fur. His face was brown, hollow, and wrinkled, but red at the cheek-bones from hard work and exposure to the weather.

“Excuse me, monsieur, if I take the liberty of speaking to you,” he said, touching Derville on the arm. “But I supposed when I saw you that you were the general's friend.”

“Well,” said Derville, “what interest have you in him? Who are you?” added the distrustful lawyer.

“I am Louis Vergniaud,” answered the man, “and I want to have a word with you.”

“Then it is you who lodge the Comte Chabert in this way, is it?”

“Pardon it, monsieur. He has the best room in the house. I would have given him mine if I had had one, and slept myself in the stable. A man who has suffered as he has and who is teaching my kids to read, a general, an Egyptian, the first lieutenant under whom I served, — why, all I have is his! I’ve shared all with him. Unluckily it is so little, — bread and milk and eggs! However, when you’re on a campaign you must live with the mess; and little as it is, it is given with a full heart, monsieur. But he has vexed us.”

“He!”

“Yes, monsieur, vexed us; there’s no going behind that. I took this establishment, which is more than I can manage, and he saw that. It troubled him, and he would do my work and take care of the horse! I kept saying to him, ‘No, no, my general!’ But there! he only answered, ‘Am I a lazybones? don’t I know how to put my shoulder to the wheel?’ So I gave notes for the value of my cow-house to a man named Grados. Do you know him, monsieur?”

“But, my good friend, I have n't the time to listen to all this. Tell me only how Colonel Chabert vexed you.”

“He did vex us, monsieur, just as true as my name is Louis Vergniaud, and my wife cried about it. He heard from the neighbors that I couldn't meet that note; and the old fellow, without a word to us, took all you gave him, and, little by little, paid the note! Wasn't it a trick! My wife and I knew he went without tobacco all that time, poor old man! But now, yes, he has the cigars, — I'd sell my own self sooner! But it does vex us. Now, I propose to you to lend me on this establishment three hundred francs, so that we may get him some clothes and furnish his room. He thinks he has paid us, does n't he? Well, the truth is, he has made us his debtors. Yes, he has vexed us; he shouldn't have played us such a trick, — wasn't it almost an insult? Such friends as we are! As true as my name is Louis Vergniaud, I will mortgage myself rather than not return you that money.”

Derville looked at the cow-keeper, then he made a step backward and looked at the house, the yard, the the manure, the stable, the rabbits, and the children.

“Faith!” thought he to himself, “I do believe one of the characteristics of virtue is to own nothing. ‘Yes,’ he said aloud, “you shall have your three hundred francs, and more too. But it is not I who give them

to you, it is the colonel; he will be rich enough to help you, and I shall not deprive him of that pleasure."

"Will it be soon?"

"Yes, soon."

"Good God! how happy my wife will be." The tanned face of the cow-keeper brightened into joy.

"Now," thought Derville as he jumped into his cabriolet, "to face the enemy. She must not see our game, but we must know hers, and win it at one trick. She is a woman. What are women most afraid of? Why, of—"

He began to study the countess's position, and fell into one of those deep reveries to which great politicians are prone when they prepare their plans and try to guess the secrets of foreign powers. Lawyers are, in a way, statesmen, to whom the management of individual interests is intrusted. A glance at the situation of Monsieur le Comte Ferraud and his wife is necessary for a full comprehension of the lawyer's genius.

Monsieur le Comte Ferraud was the son of a former councillor of the parliament of Paris, who had emigrated during the Terror, and who, though he saved his head, lost his property. He returned to France under the Consulate, and remained faithful to the interests of Louis XVIII., in whose suite his father had been before the Revolution. His son, therefore, belonged to that

section of the faubourg Saint-Germain which nobly resisted the Napoleonic seductions. The young count's reputation for good sense and sagacity when he was called simply "Monsieur Ferraud" made him the object of a few imperial blandishments; for the Emperor took as much satisfaction in his conquests over the aristocracy as he did in winning a battle. The count was promised the restitution of his title, also, that of all his property which was not sold, and hopes were held out of a ministry in the future, and a senatorship. The Emperor failed. At the time of Comte Chabert's death Monsieur Ferraud was a young man twenty-six years of age, without fortune, agreeable in appearance and manner, and a social success, whom the faubourg Saint-Germain adopted as one of its distinguished figures.

Madame la Comtesse Chabert had managed the property derived from her late husband so well that after a widowhood of eighteen months she possessed an income of nearly forty thousand francs a year. Her marriage with the young count was not regarded as news by the coteries of the faubourg. Napoleon, who was pleased with an alliance which met his ideas of fusion, returned to Madame Chabert the money derived by the Treasury from her late husband's estate; but here again Napoleon's hopes were foiled. Madame Ferraud not only adored a lover in the young man, but she was attracted by the idea of entering that haughty

society which, in spite of its political abasement, was still far above that of the imperial court. Her various vanities as well as her passions were gratified by this marriage. She felt she was about to become "an elegant woman."

When the faubourg Saint-Germain ascertained that the young count's marriage was not a defection from their ranks, all salons were opened to his wife. The Restoration took place. The political fortunes of the Comte Ferraud made no rapid strides. He understood very well the exigencies of Louis XVIII.'s position; he was one of the initiated who waited until "the revolutionary gulf was closed," — a royal phrase which the liberals laughed at, but which, nevertheless, hid a deep political meaning. However, the ordinance with its long-winded clerical phrases quoted by Godeschal in the first pages of this story restored to the Comte Ferraud two forests and an estate which had risen in value during its sequestration. At the period of which we write Comte Ferraud was councillor of State, also a director-general, and he considered his position as no more than the opening of his political career. Absorbed in the pursuit of an eager ambition, he depended much on his secretary, a ruined lawyer named Delbecq, — a man who was more than able, one who knew every possible resource of pettifogging sophistry, to whom the count left the management of all his private affairs.

This clever practitioner understood his position in the count's household far too well not to be honest out of policy. He hoped for some place under government through the influence of his patron, whose property he took care of to the best of his ability. His conduct so completely refuted the dark story of his earlier life that he was now thought to be a calumniated man.

The countess, however, with the shrewd tact of a woman, fathomed the secretary, watched him carefully, and knew so well how to manage him, that she had already largely increased her fortune by his help. She contrived to convince Delbecq that she ruled Monsieur Ferrand, and promised that she would get him made judge of a municipal court in one of the most important cities in France if he devoted himself wholly to her interests. The promise of an irremovable office, which would enable him to marry advantageously and improve his political career until he became in the end a deputy, made Delbecq Madame Ferrand's abject tool. His watchfulness enabled her to profit by all those lucky chances which the fluctuations of the Bourse and the rise of property in Paris during the first three years of the Restoration offered to clever manipulators of money. Delbecq had tripled her capital with all the more ease because his plans commended themselves to the countess as a rapid method of making her fortune enormous. She spent the emoluments of

the count's various offices on the household expenses, so as to invest every penny of her own income, and Delbecq aided and abetted this avarice without inquiring into its motives. Men of his kind care nothing for the discovery of any secrets that do not affect their own interests. Besides, he accounted for it naturally by that thirst for gold which possesses nearly all Parisian women; and as he knew how large a fortune Comte Ferraud's ambitions needed to support them, he sometimes fancied that he saw in the countess's greed a sign of her devotion to a man with whom she was still in love.

Madame Ferraud buried the motives of her conduct in the depths of her own heart. There lay the secrets of life and death to her; there is the kernel of our present history.

At the beginning of the year 1818 the Restoration was established on an apparently firm and immovable basis; its governmental doctrines, as understood by superior minds, seemed likely to lead France into an era of renewed prosperity. Then it was that society changed front. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud found that she had made a marriage of love and wealth and ambition. Still young and beautiful, she played the part of a woman of fashion and lived in the court atmosphere. Rich herself, and rich through her husband, who had the credit of being one of the ablest men of the royalist party, a friend of the king and likely to

become a minister, she belonged to the aristocracy and shared its glamour.

In the midst of this triumphant prosperity a moral cancer fastened upon her. Men have feelings which women guess in spite of every effort made by such men to bury them. At the time of the king's first return Comte Ferraud was conscious of some regrets for his marriage. The widow of Colonel Chabert had brought him no useful connections; he was alone and without influence, to make his way in a career full of obstacles and full of enemies. Then, perhaps, after he had coolly judged his wife, he saw certain defects of education which made her unsuitable, and unable, to further his projects. A word he once said about Talleyrand's marriage enlightened the countess and showed her that if the past had to be done over again he would never make her his wife. What woman would forgive that regret, containing as it did, the germs of all insults, nay, of all crimes and all repudiations!

Let us conceive the wound that this discovery made in the heart of a woman who feared the return of her first husband. She knew that he lived; she had repulsed him. Then, for a short time, she heard no more of him, and took comfort in the hope that he was killed at Waterloo together with the imperial eagles and Bontin. She then conceived the idea of binding her second husband to her by the strongest of ties, by a chain of

gold ; and she determined to be so rich that her great fortune should make that second marriage indissoluble if by chance Comte Chabert reappeared. He had reappeared ; and she was unable to understand why the struggle she so much dreaded was not begun. Perhaps the man's sufferings, perhaps an illness had delivered her from him. Perhaps he was half-crazy and Charenton might restore his reason. She was not willing to set Delbecq or the police on his traces, for fear of putting herself in their power, or bringing on a catastrophe. There are many women in Paris who, like the Comtesse Ferraud, are living secretly with moral monsters, or skirting the edges of some abyss ; they make for themselves a callus over the region of their wound and still continue to laugh and be amused.

“There is something very singular in Comte Ferraud's situation,” said Derville to himself, after long meditation, as the cabriolet stopped before the gate of the hôtel Ferraud in the rue de Varennes. “How is it that he, so wealthy and a favorite of the king, is not already a peer of France ? Perhaps Madame de Grandlieu is right in saying that the king's policy is to give higher importance to the peerage by not lavishing it. Besides, the son of a councillor of the old parliament is neither a Crillon nor a Rohan. Comte Ferraud can enter the upper Chamber only, as it were, on sufferance. But if his marriage were ruptured would n't it be a satisfac-

tion to the king if the peerage of some of those old senators who have daughters only could descend to him? Certainly that's a pretty good fear to dangle before the countess," thought Derville, as he went up the steps of the hôtel Ferraud.

Without knowing it the lawyer had laid his finger on the secret wound, he had plunged his hand into the cancer that was destroying Madame Ferraud's life. She received him in a pretty winter dining-room, where she was breakfasting and playing with a monkey, which was fastened by a chain to a sort of little post with iron bars. The countess was wrapped in an elegant morning-gown; the curls of her pretty hair, carelessly caught up, escaped from a little cap which gave her a piquant air. She was fresh and smiling. The table glittered with the silver-gilt service, the plate, the mother-of-pearl articles; rare plants were about her, growing in splendid porcelain vases.

As the lawyer looked at Comte Chabert's wife, rich with his property, surrounded by luxury, and she herself at the apex of society, while the unhappy husband lived with the beasts in a cow-house, he said to himself: "The moral of this is that a pretty woman will never acknowledge a husband, nor even a lover, in a man with an old topcoat, a shabby wig, and broken boots." A bitter and satirical smile expressed the half-philosophic, half-sarcastic ideas that necessarily

come to a man who is so placed that he sees to the bottom of things in spite of the lies under which so many Parisian families hide their existence.

“Good morning, Monsieur Derville,” said the countess, continuing to make the monkey drink coffee.

“Madame,” he said, abruptly, for he was offended at the careless tone in which the countess greeted him. “I have come to talk to you on a serious matter.”

“Oh! I am so very sorry, but the count is absent —”

“I am glad, madame; for he would be out of place at this conference. Besides, I know from Delbecq that you prefer to do business yourself, without troubling Monsieur le comte.”

“Very good; then I will send for Delbecq,” she said.

“He could do you no good, clever as he is,” returned Derville. “Listen to me, madame; one word will suffice to make you serious. Comte Chabert is living.”

“Do you expect me to be serious when you talk such nonsense as that?” she said, bursting into a fit of laughter.

But the countess was suddenly subdued by the strange lucidity of the fixed look with which Derville questioned her, seeming to read into the depths of her soul.

“Madame,” he replied, with cold and incisive gravity, “you are not aware of the dangers of your position. I do not speak of the undeniable authenticity of the papers in the case, nor of the positive proof that can be brought of Comte Chabert’s existence. I am not a man, as you know, to take charge of a hopeless case. If you oppose our steps to prove the falsity of the death-record, you will certainly lose that first suit, and that question once settled in our favor determines all the others.”

“Then, what do you wish to speak of?”

“Not of the colonel, nor of you; neither shall I remind you of the costs a clever lawyer in possession of all the facts of the case might charge upon you, nor of the game such a man could play with those letters which you received from your first husband before you married your second —”

“It is false!” she cried, with the violence of a spoilt beauty. “I have never received a letter from Comte Chabert. If any one calls himself the colonel he is a swindler, a galley-slave perhaps, like Cogniard; it makes me shudder to think of it. How can the colonel come to life again? Bonaparte himself sent me condolences on his death by an aid-de-camp; and I now draw a pension of three thousand francs granted to his widow by the Chambers. I have every right to reject all Chaberts past, present, and to come.”

“Happily we are alone, madame, and we can lie at our ease,” he said, coldly, inwardly amused by inciting the anger which shook the countess, for the purpose of forcing her into some betrayal, — a trick familiar to all lawyers, who remain calm and impassible themselves when their clients or their adversaries get angry.

“Now then, to measure swords!” he said to himself, thinking of a trap he could lay to force her to show her weakness. “The proof that Colonel Chabert’s first letter reached you exists, madame,” he said aloud. “It contained a draft.”

“No, it did not; there was no draft,” she said.

“Then the letter did reach you,” continued Derville, smiling. “You are caught in the first trap a lawyer lays for you, and yet you think you can fight the law!”

The countess blushed, turned pale, and hid her face in her hands. Then she shook off her shame, and said, with the coolness which belongs to women of her class, “As you are the lawyer of the impostor Chabert, have the goodness to —”

“Madame,” said Derville, interrupting her, “I am at this moment your lawyer as well as the colonel’s. Do you think I wish to lose a client as valuable to me as you are? But you are not listening to me.”

“Go on, monsieur,” she said, graciously.

“Your fortune came from Monsieur le Comte Cha-

bert, and you have repudiated him. Your property is colossal, and you let him starve. Madame, lawyers can be very eloquent when their cases are eloquent; here are circumstances which can raise the hue-and-cry of public opinion against you."

"But, Monsieur," said the countess, irritated by the manner in which Derville turned and returned her on his gridiron, "admitting that your Monsieur Chabert exists, the courts will sustain my second marriage on account of my children, and I shall get off by repaying two hundred and fifty thousand francs to Monsieur Chabert."

"Madame, there is no telling how a court of law may view a matter of feeling. If, on the one hand, we have a mother and two children, on the other there is a man overwhelmed by undeserved misfortune, aged by you, left to starve by your rejection. Besides, the judges cannot go against the law. Your marriage with the colonel puts the law on his side; he has the prior right. But, if you appear in such an odious light you may find an adversary you little expect. That, madame, is the danger I came to warn you of."

"Another adversary!" she said, "who?"

"Monsieur le Comte Ferraud, madame."

"Monsieur Ferraud is too deeply attached to me, and respects the mother of his children too —"

"Ah, madame," said Derville, interrupting her, "why

talk such nonsense to a lawyer who can read hearts. At the present moment Monsieur Ferraud has not the slightest desire to annul his marriage, and I have no doubt he adores you. But if some one went to him and told him that his marriage could be annulled, that his wife would be arraigned before the bar of public opinion — ”

“ He would defend me, monsieur.”

“ No, madame.”

“ What reason would he have for deserting me? ”

“ That of marrying the only daughter of some peer of France, whose title would descend to him by the king’s decree.”

The countess turned pale.

“ I have her ! ” thought Derville. “ Good, the poor colonel’s cause is won. Moreover, madame,” he said aloud, “ Monsieur Ferraud will feel the less regret because a man covered with glory, a general, a count, a grand officer of the Legion of honor, is certainly not a derogation to you, — if such a man asks for his wife — ”

“ Enough, enough, monsieur,” she cried ; “ I can have no lawyer but you. What must I do? ”

“ Compromise.”

“ Does he still love me? ”

“ How could it be otherwise? ”

At these words the countess threw up her head. A

gleam of hope shone in her eyes ; perhaps she thought of speculating on her husband's tenderness and winning her way by some female wile.

“ I shall await your orders, madame ; you will let me know whether we are to serve notices of Comte Chabert's suit upon you, or whether you will come to my office and arrange the basis of a compromise,” said Derville, bowing as he left the room.

Eight days after these visits paid by Derville, on a fine June morning, the husband and wife, parted by an almost supernatural circumstance, were making their way from the opposite extremes of Paris, to meet again in the office of their mutual lawyer. Certain liberal advances made by Derville to the colonel enabled the latter to clothe himself in accordance with his rank. He came in a clean cab. His head was covered with a suitable wig ; he was dressed in dark-blue cloth and spotlessly white linen, and he wore beneath his waist-coat the broad red ribbon of the grand officers of the Legion of honor. In resuming the dress and the habits of affluence he had also recovered his former martial elegance. He walked erect. His face, grave and mysterious, and bearing the signs of happiness and renewed hope, seemed younger and fuller ; he was no more like the old Chabert in the top-coat than a two-sous piece is like a forty-franc coin just issued. All

who passed him knew him at once for a noble relic of our old army, one of those heroic men on whom the light of our national glory shines, who reflect it, as shattered glass illuminated by the sun returns a thousand rays. Such old soldiers are books and pictures too.

The count sprang from the carriage to enter Derville's office with the agility of a young man. The cab had hardly turned away before a pretty coupé with armorial bearings drove up. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud got out of it in a simple dress, but one well suited to display her youthful figure. She wore a pretty drawn bonnet lined with pink, which framed her face delightfully, concealed its exact outline, and restored its freshness.

Though the clients were thus rejuvenated, the office remained its old self, such as we saw it when this history began. Simonnin was eating his breakfast, one shoulder leaning against the window, which was now open; he was gazing at the blue sky above the courtyard formed by four blocks of black buildings.

"Ha!" cried the gutter-jumper, "who wants to bet a play now that Colonel Chabert is a general and a red-ribbon?"

"Derville is a downright magician," said Godeschal.

"There's no trick to play him this time," said Desroches.

“His wife will do that, the Comtesse Ferraud,” said Boucard.

“Then she ’ll have to belong to two — ”

“Here she is !” cried Simounin.

Just then the colonel came in and asked for Derville.

“He is in, Monsieur le Comte,” said Simounin.

“So you are not deaf, you young scamp,” said Chabert, catching the gutter-jumper by the ear and twisting it, to the great satisfaction of the other clerks, who laughed and looked at the colonel with the inquisitive interest due to so singular a personage.

Colonel Chabert was in Derville’s room when his wife entered the office.

“Say, Boucard, what a queer scene there ’s going to be in the master’s room ! She can live the even days with Comte Ferraud, and the uneven days with Comte Chabert — ”

“Leap-year the colonel will gain,” said Godeschal.

“Hold your tongues, gentlemen,” said Boucard, severely. “You ’ll be overheard. I never knew an office in which the clerks made such fun of the clients as you do here.”

Derville had put the colonel into an adjoining room by the time the countess was ushered in.

“Madame,” he said to her, “not knowing if it would be agreeable to you to meet Monsieur le Comte Chabert, I have separated you. If, however, you wish — ”

“ I thank you for that consideration, monsieur.”

“ I have prepared the draught of an agreement, the conditions of which can be discussed here and now, between you and Monsieur Chabert. I will go from one to the other and convey the remarks of each.”

“ Begin, monsieur,” said the countess, showing signs of impatience.

Derville read : “ Between the undersigned, — Monsieur Hyacinthe, called Chabert, count, brigadier-general, and grand officer of the Legion of honor, living in Paris, in the rue du Petit-Banquier, of the first part, and Madame Rose Chapotel, wife of the above-named Monsieur le Comte Chabert, born — ”

“ That will do,” she said ; “ skip the preamble and come to the conditions.”

“ Madame,” said the lawyer, “ the preamble explains succinctly the position which you hold to each other. Then, in article one, you recognize in presence of three witnesses, namely, two notaries, and the cow-keeper with whom your husband lives, to all of whom I have confided your secret and who will keep it faithfully, — you recognize, I say, that the individual mentioned in the accompanying deeds and whose identity is elsewhere established by affidavits prepared by Alexander Crottat, your notary, is the Comte Chabert, your first husband. In article two Comte Chabert, for the sake of your welfare, agrees to make no use of his rights

except under circumstances provided for in the agreement,— and those circumstances,” remarked Derville in a parenthesis, “are the non-fulfilment of the clauses of this private agreement. Monsieur Chabert, on his part,” he continued, “consents to sue with you for a judgment which shall set aside the record of his death, and also dissolve his marriage.”

“But that will not suit me at all,” said the countess, astonished; “I don’t wish a lawsuit, you know why.”

“In article three,” continued the lawyer, with imperturbable coolness, “you agree to secure to the said Hyacinthe, Comte Chabert, an annuity of twenty-four thousand francs now invested in the public Funds, the capital of which will devolve on you at his death.”

“But that is far too dear!” cried the countess.

“Can you compromise for less?”

“Perhaps so.”

“What is it you want, madame?”

“I want — I don’t want a suit. I want —”

“To keep him dead,” said Derville, quickly.

“Monsieur,” said the countess, “if he asks twenty-four thousand francs a year, I’ll demand justice.”

“Yes, justice!” cried a hollow voice, as the colonel opened the door and appeared suddenly before his wife, with one hand in his waistcoat and the other pointing to the floor, a gesture to which the memory of his great disaster gave a horrible meaning.

“It is he!” said the countess in her own mind.

“Too dear?” continued the old soldier, “I gave you a million and now you trade on my poverty. Well, then, I will have you and my property both; our marriage is not void.”

“But monsieur is not Colonel Chabert!” cried the countess, feigning surprise.

“Ah!” said the old man, in a tone of irony, “do you want proofs? Well, did I not take you from the pavements of the Palais-Royal?”

The countess turned pale. Seeing her color fade beneath her rouge, the old soldier, sorry for the suffering he was inflicting on a woman he had once loved ardently, stopped short; but she gave him such a venomous look that he suddenly added, “You were with —”

“For heaven’s sake, monsieur,” said the countess, appealing to the lawyer, “allow me to leave this place. I did not come here to listen to such insults.”

She left the room. Derville sprang into the office after her; but she seemed to have taken wings and was already gone. When he returned to his own room he found the colonel walking up and down in a paroxysm of rage.

“In those days men took their wives where they liked,” he said. “But I chose ill; I ought never to have trusted her; she has no heart!”

“Colonel, you will admit I was right in begging you

not to come here! I am now certain of your identity. When you came in the countess made a little movement the meaning of which was not to be doubted. But you have lost your cause. Your wife now knows that you are unrecognizable."

"I will kill her."

"Nonsense! then you would be arrested and guillotined as a criminal. Besides, you might miss your stroke; it is unpardonable not to kill a wife when you attempt it. Leave me to undo your folly, you big child! Go away; but take care of yourself, for she is capable of laying some trap and getting you locked up at Charenton. I will see about serving the notices of the suit on her at once; that will be some protection to you."

The poor colonel obeyed his young benefactor, and went away, stammering a few excuses. He was going slowly down the dark staircase lost in gloomy thought, overcome perhaps by the blow he had just received, to him the worst, the one that went deepest to his heart, when, as he reached the lower landing, he heard the rustle of a gown, and his wife appeared.

"Come, monsieur," she said, taking his arm with a movement like others he once knew so well.

The action, the tones of her voice, now soft and gentle, calmed the colonel's anger, and he allowed her to lead him to her carriage.

“Get in,” she said, when the footman had let down the steps.

And he suddenly found himself, as if by magic, seated beside his wife in the coupé.

“Where to, madame?” asked the footman.

“To Groslay,” she replied.

The horses started, and the carriage crossed the whole city.

“Monsieur!” said the countess, in a tone of voice that seemed to betray one of those rare emotions, few in life, which shake our whole being.

At such moments heart, fibres, nerves, soul, body, countenance, all, even the pores of the skin, quiver. Life seems no longer in us; it gushes out, it conveys itself like a contagion, it transmits itself in a look, in a tone of the voice, in a gesture, in the imposition of our will on others. The old soldier trembled, hearing that word, that first, that expressive “Monsieur!” It was at once a reproach, a prayer, a pardon, a hope, a despair, a question, an answer. That one word included all. A woman must needs be a great comedian to throw such eloquence and so many feelings into one word. Truth is never so complete in its expression; it cannot utter itself wholly, — it leaves something to be seen within. The colonel was filled with remorse for his suspicions, his exactions, his anger, and he lowered his eyes to conceal his feelings.

“Monsieur,” continued the countess, after an almost imperceptible pause, “I knew you at once.”

“Rosine,” said the old soldier, “that word contains the only balm that can make me forget my troubles.”

Two great tears fell hotly on his wife’s hands, which he pressed as if to show her a paternal affection.

“Monsieur,” she continued, “how is it you did not see what it cost me to appear before a stranger in a position so false as mine. If I am forced to blush for what I am, at least let it be in my own home. Ought not such a secret to remain buried in our own hearts? You will, I hope, forgive my apparent indifference to the misfortunes of a Chabert in whom I had no reason to believe. I did receive your letters,” she said, hastily, seeing a sudden objection on her husband’s face; “but they reached me thirteen months after the battle of Eylau; they were open, torn, dirty; the writing was unknown to me; and I, who had just obtained Napoleon’s signature to my new marriage contract, supposed that some clever swindler was trying to impose upon me. Not wishing to trouble Monsieur Ferraud’s peace of mind, or to bring future trouble into the family, I was right, was I not, to take every precaution against a false Chabert?”

“Yes, you were right; and I have been a fool, a dolt, a beast, not to have foreseen the consequences of such a situation. But where are we going?” asked the

colonel, suddenly noticing that they had reached the *Barrière de la Chapelle*.

“To my country-place near Groslay, in the valley of *Montmorency*,” she replied. “There, *monsieur*, we can think over, together, the course we ought to take. I know my duty. Though I am yours legally, I am no longer yours in fact. Surely, you cannot wish that we should be the common talk of Paris. Let us hide from the public a situation which, for me, has a mortifying side, and strive to maintain our dignity. You love me still,” she continued, casting a sad and gentle look upon the colonel, “but I, was I not authorized to form other ties? In this strange position a secret voice tells me to hope in your goodness, which I know so well. Am I wrong in taking you, you only, for the sole arbiter of my fate? Be judge and pleader both; I confide in your noble nature. You will forgive the consequences of my innocent fault. I dare avow to you, therefore, that I love *Monsieur Ferraud*; I thought I had the right to love him. I do not blush for this confession; it may offend you, but it dishonors neither of us. I cannot hide the truth from you. When accident made me a widow, I was not a mother —”

The colonel made a sign with his hand as if to ask silence of his wife; and they remained silent, not saying a word for over a mile. Chabert fancied he saw her little children before him.

“Rosine!”

“Monsieur?”

“The dead do wrong to reappear.”

“Oh, monsieur, no, no! Do not think me ungrateful. But you find a mother, a woman who loves another man, where you left a wife. If it is no longer in my power to love you, I know what I owe to you, and I offer you still the devotion of a daughter.”

“Rosine,” said the old man, gently, “I feel no resentment towards you. We will forget all that once was,” he said, with one of those smiles whose charm is the reflection of a noble soul. “I am not so lost to delicacy as to ask a show of love from a woman who no longer loves me.”

The countess gave him such a grateful glance that poor Chabert wished in his heart he could return to that grave at Eylau. Certain men have souls capable of vast sacrifices, whose recompense to them is the certainty of the happiness of one they love.

“My friend, we will talk of all this later, with a quiet mind,” said the countess.

The conversation took another turn, for it was impossible to continue it long in this strain. Though husband and wife constantly touched upon their strange position, either by vague allusions, or grave remarks, they nevertheless made a charming journey, recalling many of the events of their union, and of the Empire.

The countess knew how to impart a tender charm to these memories, and to cast a tinge of melancholy upon the conversation, enough at least to keep it serious. She revived love without exciting desire, and showed her first husband the mental graces and knowledge she had acquired, — trying to let him taste the happiness of a father beside a cherished daughter. The colonel had known the countess of the Empire, he now saw a countess of the Restoration.

They at last arrived, through a cross-road, at a fine park in the little valley which separates the heights of Margency from the pretty village of Groslay. The house was a delightful one, and the colonel saw on arriving that all was prepared for their stay. Misfortune is a sort of talisman, the power of which lies in strengthening and fulfilling our natural man; it increases the distrust and evil tendencies of certain natures just as it increases the goodness of those whose heart is sound. Misfortune had made the colonel more helpful and better than he had ever been; he was therefore able to enter into those secrets of woman's suffering which are usually unknown to men. And yet, in spite of his great lack of distrust, he could not help saying to his wife: —

“ You seem to have been sure of bringing me here?”

“ Yes,” she answered, “ if I found Colonel Chabert in the petitioner.”

The tone of truth which she gave to that answer dispersed the few doubts which the colonel already felt ashamed of admitting.

For three days the countess was truly admirable in her conduct to her first husband. By tender care and constant gentleness she seemed to try to efface even the memory of the sufferings he had endured, and to win pardon for the misfortunes she had, as she admitted, innocently caused. She took pleasure in displaying for his benefit, though always with a sort of melancholy, the particular charms under the influence of which she knew him to be feeble, — for men are more particularly susceptible to certain ways, to certain graces of heart and mind; and those they are unable to resist. She wanted to interest him in her situation, to move his feelings enough to control his mind and so bend him absolutely to her will. Resolved to take any means to reach her ends, she was still uncertain what to do with the man, though she meant, undoubtedly, to destroy him socially.

On the evening of the third day she began to feel that in spite of all her efforts she could no longer conceal the anxiety she felt as to the result of her manoeuvres. To obtain a moment's relief she went up to her own room, sat down at her writing-table, and took off the mask of tranquillity she had worn before the colonel, like an actress returning weary to her room after a

trying fifth act and falling half-dead upon a couch, while the audience retains an image of her to which she bears not the slightest resemblance. She began to finish a letter already begun to Delbecq, telling him to go to Derville and ask in her name for a sight of the papers which concerned Colonel Chabert, to copy them, and come immediately to Groslay. She had hardly finished before she heard the colonel's step in the corridor; for he was coming, full of anxiety, to find her.

“Oh!” she said aloud, “I wish I were dead! my position is intolerable —”

“What is it? is anything the matter?” said the worthy man.

“Nothing, nothing,” she said.

She rose, left the colonel where he was, and went to speak to her maid without witnesses, telling her to go at once to Paris and deliver the letter, which she gave her, into Delbecq's own hands, and to bring it back to her as soon as he read it. Then she went out and seated herself on a bench in the garden, where she was in full view of the colonel if he wished to find her. He was already searching for her and he soon came.

“Rosine,” he said, “tell me what is the matter.”

She did not answer. It was one of those glorious calm evenings of the month of June, when all secret harmonies diffuse such peace, such sweetness in the sunsets. The air was pure, the silence deep, and a

distant murmur of children's voices added a sort of melody to the consecrated scene.

"You do not answer me," said the colonel.

"My husband —" began the countess, then she stopped, made a movement, and said, appealingly, with a blush, "What ought I to say in speaking of Monsieur le Comte Ferraud?"

"Call him your husband, my poor child," answered the colonel, in a kind tone; "he is the father of your children."

"Well, then," she continued, "if he asks me what I am doing here, if he learns that I have shut myself up with an unknown man, what am I to say? Hear me, monsieur," she went on, taking an attitude that was full of dignity, "decide my fate; I feel I am resigned to everything —"

"Dear," said the colonel, grasping his wife's hands, "I have resolved to sacrifice myself wholly to your happiness —"

"That is impossible," she cried, with a convulsive movement. "Remember that in that case you must renounce your own identity — and do so legally."

"What!" exclaimed the colonel, "does not my word satisfy you?"

The term "legally" fell like lead upon the old man's heart and roused an involuntary distrust. He cast a look upon his wife which made her blush; she lowered

her eyes, and for a moment he feared he should be forced to despise her. The countess was alarmed lest she had startled the honest shame, the stern uprightness of a man whose generous nature and whose primitive virtues were well-known to her. Though these ideas brought a cloud to each brow they were suddenly dispelled, harmony was restored, — and thus: A child's cry resounded in the distance.

“ Jules, let your sister alone ! ” cried the countess.

“ What ! are your children here ? ” exclaimed the colonel.

“ Yes, but I forbade them to come in your way.”

The old soldier understood the delicacy and the womanly tact shown in that graceful consideration, and he took her hand to kiss it.

“ Let them come ! ” he said.

The little girl ran up to complain of her brother.

“ Mamma ! he plagued me — ”

“ Mamma ! ”

“ It was his fault — ”

“ It was hers — ”

The hands were stretched out to the mother, and the two voices mingled. It was a sudden, delightful picture.

“ My poor children ! ” exclaimed the countess, not restraining her tears, “ must I lose them ? To whom will the court give them ? A mother's heart cannot be shared. I will have them ! yes, I — ”

“You are making mamma cry,” said Jules, the elder, with an angry look at the colonel.

“Hush, Jules!” cried his mother, peremptorily.

The two children examined their mother and the stranger with an indescribable curiosity.

“Yes,” continued the countess, “if I am parted from Monsieur Ferraud, they must leave me my children; if I have them, I can bear all.”

Those words brought the success she expected.

“Yes,” cried the colonel, as if completing a sentence he had begun mentally. “I must return to the grave; I have thought so already.”

“How can I accept such a sacrifice?” replied the countess. “If men have died to save the honor of their mistresses, they gave their lives but once. But this would be giving your daily life, your lifetime! No, no, it is impossible; if it were only your existence perhaps it might be nothing, but to sign a record that you are not Colonel Chabert, to admit yourself an impostor, to sacrifice your honor, to live à lie for all the days of your life, — no; human devotion cannot go to such a length! No, no! if it were not for my poor children I would fly with you to the ends of the earth.”

“But,” said Chabert, “why can I not live here, in that little cottage, as a friend and relative. I am as useless as an old cannon; all I need is a little tobacco and the ‘*Constitutionnel*.’”

The countess burst into tears. Then followed a struggle of generosity between them, from which Colonel Chabert came forth a conqueror. One evening, watching the mother in the midst of her children, deeply moved by that picture of a home, influenced, too, by the silence and the quiet of the country, he came to the resolution of remaining dead; no longer resisting the thought of a legal instrument, he asked his wife what steps he should take to secure, irrevocably, the happiness of that home.

“Do what you will,” replied the countess; “I declare positively that I will have nothing to do with it, — I ought not.”

Delbecq had then been in the house a few days, and, in accordance with the countess’s verbal instructions, he had wormed himself into the confidence of the old soldier. The morning after this little scene Colonel Chabert accompanied the former lawyer to Saint-Leu-Taverny, where Delbecq had already had an agreement drawn up by a notary, in terms so crude and brutal that on hearing them the colonel abruptly left the office.

“Good God! would you make me infamous! why, I should be called a forger!”

“Monsieur,” said Delbecq, “I advise you not to sign too quickly. You could get at least thirty thousand francs a year out of this affair; Madame would give them.”

Blasting that scoundrel emeritus with the luminous glance of an indignant honest man, the colonel rushed from the place driven by a thousand conflicting feelings. He was again distrustful, indignant, and merciful by turns. After a time he re-entered the park of Groslay by a breach in the wall, and went, with slow steps, to rest and think at his ease, in a little study built beneath a raised kiosk which commanded a view of the road from Saint-Leu.

The path was made of that yellow earth which now takes the place of river-gravel, and the countess, who was sitting in the kiosk above, did not hear the slight noise of the colonel's footstep, being preoccupied with anxious thoughts as to the success of her plot. Neither did the old soldier become aware of the presence of his wife in the kiosk above him.

"Well, Monsieur Delbecq, did he sign?" asked the countess, when she saw the secretary, over the snuff-box, alone upon the road.

"No, Madame; and I don't even know what has become of him. The old horse reared."

"We shall have to put him in Charenton," she said; "we can do it."

The colonel, recovering the elasticity of his youth, jumped the ha-ha, and in the twinkling of an eye applied the hardest pair of slaps that ever two cheeks received. "Old horses kick!" he said.

His anger once over, the colonel had no strength left to jump the ditch again. The truth lay before him in its nakedness. His wife's words and Delbecq's answer had shown him the plot to which he had so nearly been a victim. The tender attentions he had received were the bait of the trap. That thought was like a sudden poison, and it brought back to the old hero his past sufferings, physical and mental. He returned to the kiosk through a gate of the park, walking slowly like a broken man. So, then, there was no peace, no truce for him! Must he enter upon that odious struggle with a woman which Derville had explained to him? must he live a life of legal suits? must he feed on gall, and drink each morning the cup of bitterness. Then, dreadful thought! where was the money for such suits to come from. So deep a disgust of life came over him, that had a pistol been at hand he would have blown out his brains. Then he fell back into the confusion of ideas which, ever since his interview with Derville in the cow-yard, had changed his moral being. At last, reaching the kiosk, he went up the stairs to the upper chamber, whose oriel windows looked out on all the enchanting perspectives of that well-known valley, and where he found his wife sitting on a chair. The countess was looking at the landscape, with a calm and quiet demeanor, and that impenetrable countenance which certain determined women know so well how to assume. She dried her

eyes, as though she had shed tears, and played, as if abstractedly, with the ribbons of her sash. Nevertheless, in spite of this apparent composure, she could not prevent herself from trembling when she saw her noble benefactor before her, — standing, his arms crossed, his face pale, his brow stern.

“Madame,” he said, looking at her so fixedly for a moment that he forced her to blush; “Madame, I do not curse you, but I despise you. I now thank the fate which has parted us. I have no desire for vengeance; I have ceased to love you. I want nothing from you. Live in peace upon the faith of my word; it is worth more than the legal papers of all the notaries in Paris. I shall never take the name I made, perhaps, illustrious. Henceforth, I am but a poor devil named Hyacinthe, who asks no more than a place in God’s sunlight. Farewell —”

The countess flung herself at his feet and tried to hold him by catching his hands, but he repulsed her with disgust, saying, “Do not touch me!”

The countess made a gesture which no description can portray when she heard the sound of her husband’s departing steps. Then, with that profound sagacity which comes of great wickedness, or of the savage, material selfishness of this world, she felt she might live in peace, relying on the promise and the contempt of that loyal soldier.

Chabert disappeared. The cow-keeper failed and became a cab-driver. Perhaps the colonel at first found some such occupation. Perhaps, like a stone flung into the rapids, he went from fall to fall until he sank engulfed in that great pool of filth and penury which welters in the streets of Paris.

Six months after these events Derville, who had heard nothing of Colonel-Chabert or of the Comtesse Ferraud, thought that they had probably settled on a compromise, and that the countess, out of spite, had employed some other lawyer to draw the papers. Accordingly, one morning he summed up the amounts advanced to the said Chabert, added the costs, and requested the Comtesse Ferraud to obtain from Monsieur le Comte Chabert the full amount, presuming that she knew the whereabouts of her first husband.

The next day Comte Ferraud's secretary sent the following answer:—

MONSIEUR, — I am directed by Madame la Comtesse Ferraud to inform you that your client totally deceived you, and that the individual calling himself the Comte Chabert admitted having falsely taken that name.

Receive the assurance, etc., etc.

DELBECQ.

“Well, some people are, upon my honor, as devoid of sense as the beasts of the field, — they've stolen

their baptism!" cried Derville. "Be human, be generous, be philanthropic, and you 'll find yourself in the lurch! Here's a business that has cost me over two thousand francs."

Not long after the reception of this letter Derville was at the Palais, looking for a lawyer with whom he wished to speak, and who was in the habit of practising in the criminal courts. It so chanced that Derville entered the sixth court-room as the judge was sentencing a vagrant named Hyacinthe to two months' imprisonment, the said vagrant to be conveyed at the expiration of the sentence to the mendicity office of the Saint-Denis quarter, — a sentence which was equivalent to perpetual imprisonment. The name, Hyacinthe, caught Derville's ear, and he looked at the delinquent sitting between two gendarmes on the prisoner's bench, and recognized at once his false Colonel Chabert. The old soldier was calm, motionless, almost absent-minded. In spite of his rags, in spite of the poverty marked on every feature of the face, his countenance was instinct with noble pride. His glance had an expression of stoicism which a magistrate ought not to have overlooked; but when a man falls into the hands of justice, he is no longer anything but an entity, a question of law and facts; in the eyes of statisticians, he is a numeral.

When the soldier was taken from the court-room to wait until the whole batch of vagabonds who were then

being sentenced were ready for removal, Derville used his privilege as a lawyer to follow him into the room adjoining the sheriff's office, where he watched him for a few moments, together with the curious collection of beggars who surrounded him. The ante-chamber of a sheriff's office presents at such times a sight which, unfortunately, neither legislators, nor philanthropists, nor painters, nor writers, ever study. Like all the laboratories of the law this antechamber is dark and ill-smelling; the walls are protected by a bench, blackened by the incessant presence of the poor wretches who come to this central rendezvous from all quarters of social wretchedness, — not one of which is unrepresented there. A poet would say that the daylight was ashamed to lighten that terrible sink-hole of all miseries. There is not one spot within it where crime, planned or committed, has not stood; not a spot where some man, rendered desperate by the stigma which justice lays upon him for his first fault, has not begun a career leading to the scaffold or to suicide. All those who fall in Paris rebound against these yellow walls, on which a philanthropist could decipher the meaning of many a suicide about which hypocritical writers, incapable of taking one step to prevent them, rail; written on those walls he will find a preface to the dramas of the Morgue and those of the place de Grève. Colonel Chabert was now sitting in the midst of this crowd of men with

nervous faces, clothed in the horrible liveries of poverty, silent at times or talking in a low voice, for three gendarmes paced the room as sentries, their sabres clanging against the floor.

“Do you recognize me?” said Derville to the old soldier.

“Yes, Monsieur,” said Chabert, rising.

“If you are an honest man,” continued Derville, in a low voice, “how is it that you have remained my debtor?”

The old soldier colored like a young girl accused by her mother of a clandestine love.

“Is it possible,” he cried in a loud voice, “that Madame Ferraud has not paid you?”

“Paid me!” said Derville, “she wrote me you were an impostor.”

The colonel raised his eyes with a majestic look of horror and invocation as if to appeal to heaven against this new treachery. “Monsieur,” he said, in a voice that was calm though it faltered, “ask the gendarmes to be so kind as to let me go into the sheriff’s office; I will there write you an order which will certainly be paid.”

Derville spoke to the corporal, and was allowed to take his client into the office, where the colonel wrote a few lines and addressed them to the Comtesse Ferraud.

“Send that to her,” he said, “and you will be paid for your loans and all costs. Believe me, Monsieur, if

I have not shown the gratitude I owe you for your kind acts it is none the less *there*," he said, laying his hand upon his heart; "yes it is there, full, complete. But the unfortunate ones can do nothing, — they love, that is all."

"Can it be," said Derville, "that you did not stipulate for an income?"

"Don't speak of that," said the old man. "You can never know how utterly I despise this external life to which the majority of men cling so tenaciously. I was taken suddenly with an illness, — a disgust for humanity. When I think that Napoleon is at Saint-Helena all things here below are nothing to me. I can no longer be a soldier, that is my only sorrow. Ah, well," he added, with a gesture that was full of childlike playfulness, "it is better to have luxury in our feelings than in our clothes. I fear no man's contempt."

He went back to the bench and sat down. Derville went away. When he reached his office, he sent Godeschal, then advanced to be second clerk, to the Comtesse Ferraud, who had no sooner read themissive he carried than she paid the money owing to Comte Chabert's lawyer.

In 1840, towards the close of the month of June, Godeschal, then a lawyer on his own account, was on his way to Ris, in company with Derville. When they

reached the avenue which leads into the mail road to Bicêtre, they saw beneath an elm by the roadside one of those hoary, broken-down old paupers who rule the beggars about them, and live at Bicêtre just as pauper women live at La Salpêtrière. This man, one of the two thousand inmates of the "Almshouse for Old Age," was sitting on a stone and seemed to be giving all his mind to an operation well-known to the dwellers in charitable institutions; that of drying the tobacco in their handkerchiefs in the sun, — possibly to escape washing them. The old man had an interesting face. He was dressed in that gown of dark, reddish cloth which the Almshouse provides for its inmates, a dreadful sort of livery.

"Derville," said Godeschal to his companion, "do look at that old fellow. Is n't he like those grotesque figures that are made in Germany. But I suppose he lives, and perhaps he is happy!"

Derville raised his glass, looked at the pauper, and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise; then he said: "That old man, my dear fellow, is a poem, or, as the romanticists say, a drama. Did you ever meet the Comtesse Ferraud?"

"Yes, a clever woman and very agreeable, but too pious."

"That old man is her legitimate husband, Comte Chabert, formerly colonel. No doubt she has had him

placed here. If he lives in an almshouse instead of a mansion, it is because he reminded the pretty countess that he took her, like a cab, from the streets. I can still see the tigerish look she gave him when he said it."

These words so excited Godeschal's curiosity that Derville told him the whole story. Two days later, on the following Monday morning, as they were returning to Paris, the two friends glanced at Bicêtre, and Derville proposed that they should go and see Colonel Chabert. Half-way up the avenue they found the old man sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, and amusing himself by drawing lines on the gravel with a stick which he held in his hand. When they looked at him attentively they saw that he had been breakfasting elsewhere than at the almshouse.

"Good-morning, Colonel Chabert," said Derville.

"Not Chabert! not Chabert! my name is Hyacinthe," answered the old man. "I'm no longer a man; I'm number 164, seventh room," he added, looking at Derville with timid anxiety, — the fear of old age or of childhood. "You can see the condemned prisoner," he said, after a moment's silence; "he's not married, no! he's happy —"

"Poor man!" said Godeschal; "don't you want some money for tobacco?"

The colonel extended his hand with all the naïveté

of a street boy to the two strangers, who each gave him a twenty-franc gold piece. He thanked them both, with a stupid look, and said, "Brave troopers!" Then he pretended to shoulder arms and take aim at them, calling out with a laugh, "Fire the two pieces, and long live Napoleon!" after which he described an imaginary arabesque in the air, with a flourish of his cane.

"The nature of his wound must have made him childish," said Derville.

"He childish!" cried another old pauper who was watching them. "Ha! there are days when it won't do to step on his toes. He's a knowing one, full of philosophy and imagination. But to-day, don't you see, he's been keeping Monday. Why, Monsieur, he was here in 1820. Just about that time a Prussian officer, whose carriage was going over the Villejuif hill, walked by on foot. Hyacinthe and I were sitting by the roadside. The officer was talking with another, I think it was a Russian or some animal of that kind, and when they saw the old fellow, the Prussian, just to tease him, says he: 'Here's an old voltigeur who must have been at Rosbach —' 'I was too young to be at Rosbach,' says Hyacinthe, but I'm old enough to have been at Jena!' Ha, ha! that Prussian cleared off — and no more questions —"

"What a fate!" cried Derville; "born in the Found-

ling, he returns to die in the asylum of old age, having in the interval helped Napoleon to conquer Egypt and Europe! — Do you know, my dear fellow," continued Derville, after a long pause, "that there are three men in our social system who cannot respect or value the world, — the priest, the physician, and the lawyer. They wear black gowns, perhaps because they mourn for all virtues, all illusions. The most unhappy among them is the lawyer. When a man seeks a priest he is forced to it by repentance, by remorse, by beliefs which make him interesting, which ennoble him and comfort the soul of his mediator, whose duty is not without a certain sort of joy; the priest purifies, heals, reconciles. But we lawyers! we see forever the same evil feelings, never corrected; our offices are sink-holes which nothing can cleanse.

"How many things have I not seen and known and learned in my practice! I have seen a father die in a garret, penniless, abandoned by daughters, to each of whom he had given an income of forty thousand francs. I have seen wills burned. I have seen mothers robbing their children, husbands stealing from their wives, wives killing their husbands by the very love they inspired, so as to live in peace with their lovers. I have seen women giving to the children of a first marriage tastes which led them to their death, so that the child of love might be enriched. I could not tell

you what I have seen, for I have seen crimes against which justice is powerless. All the horrors that romance-writers think they invent are forever below the truth. You are about to make acquaintance with such things ; as for me, I shall live in the country with my wife ; I have a horror of Paris."

1832.

THE ATHEIST'S MASS.

THIS IS DEDICATED TO AUGUSTE BORGET, BY HIS FRIEND,
DE BALZAC.

A PHYSICIAN to whom science owes a masterly physiological theory, and who, though still young, has taken his place among the celebrities of the School of Paris, that centre of medical intelligence to which the physicians of Europe pay just homage, Doctor Horace Bianchon practised surgery for some time before he devoted himself to medicine. His studies were directed by one of the greatest of French surgeons, the illustrious Desplein, who passed like a meteor through the skies of science. Even his enemies admit that he carried with him to the grave an incommunicable method. Like all men of genius, he had no heirs of his faculty; he held all within him, and he carried all away with him.

The fame of surgeons is something like that of actors; it lives during their lifetime only, and is not fully appreciable after they are gone. Actors and

surgeons, also great singers, and all virtuosi who by execution increase the power of music tenfold, are the heroes of a moment. Desplein is a proof of the universal fate of these transitory geniuses. His name, so celebrated yesterday, to-day almost forgotten, remains within the limits of his specialty, and will never reach beyond them.

But, let us ask, must there not exist some extraordinary circumstances to bring the name of a great worker from the domain of science into the general history of humanity? Had Desplein that universality of knowledge which makes a man the Word and the Form of an era? Desplein possessed an almost divine insight; he penetrated both patient and disease with an intuition, natural or acquired, which enabled him to seize the idiosyncrasies of the individual, and so determine the exact moment, to the hour and the minute, when it was right to operate, — taking note of atmospheric conditions, and peculiarities of temperament. Was he guided in this by that power of deduction and analogy to which is due the genius of Cuvier? However that may have been, this man certainly made himself the confidant of flesh; he knew its secrets of the past, and of the future, as he dealt with its present. But did he sum up the whole of science in his own person, like Galen, Hippocrates, Aristotle? Has he led a school to new and unknown worlds? No.

Though it is impossible to deny to this perpetual observer of human chemistry some faculty of the ancient science of magic, — that is to say, a perception of principles in fusion, the causes of life, the life before the life, and what the life becomes through its preparations before being, — we must admit, speaking justly, that unfortunately all with Desplein was Self; he was isolated in life through egoism, and egoism has killed his fame. No speaking statue surmounts his tomb, and tells the future of the mysteries that genius wrested from her. But perhaps Desplein's talent was one with his beliefs, and therefore mortal. To him, the terrestrial atmosphere was a generating pouch; he saw the earth like an egg in its shell; unable to discover whether the egg or the hen were the beginning, he denied both the cock and the egg. He believed neither in the anterior animal nor in the posterior spirit of man.

Desplein was not a doubter; he affirmed his beliefs. His clear-cut atheism was like that of a great many men of science, who are the best people in the world, but invincible atheists, atheists like those religious folk who will not admit that there can be atheists. It could not be otherwise with a man accustomed from his earliest youth to dissect the human being before, during, and after life; to pry into all its apparatus and never find that soul-germ so essential to religious theories. Finding in the human body a brain centre,

a nervous centre, a centre of the blood circulation (the first two of which so complement each other that during the last two days of Desplein's life he came to a conviction that the sense of hearing was not absolutely necessary in order to hear, nor the sense of sight absolutely necessary in order to see, and that, beyond all doubt, the solar plexus did replace them), — Desplein, we say, finding thus two souls in man, corroborated his atheism by this very fact, though he asserted nothing in relation to God. The man died, the world said, in the impenitence in which so many men of noblest genius unhappily leave this life, — men whom it may, perhaps, please God to pardon.

The life of this man presented, to use the expression of his enemies, who were jealous of his fame and sought to belittle it, many pettinesses which it is more just to call apparent contradictions. Fools and detractors, having no knowledge of the influences that act upon superior minds, make the most of superficial inconsistencies, to bring accusations on which they sit in judgment. If, later, success attends the labors of a man thus attacked, showing the correlation of preparations and results, a few of the past calumnies are sure to remain fixed upon him. In our day Napoleon was condemned by contemporaries when his eagles threatened England; it needed 1822 to explain 1804 and the flat-boats of Boulogne.

Desplein's fame and science were invulnerable; his enemies therefore found fault with his odd temper, his peculiar character, — the fact being that he merely possessed that quality which the English call “eccentricity.” At times gorgeously dressed, like the tragic Crébillon, he would change suddenly to a singular indifference in the matter of clothes; sometimes he drove in his carriage, sometimes he went about on foot. By turns rough and kind, apparently crabbed and stingy, he was capable of offering his whole fortune to his exiled masters, who did him the honor to accept it for a few days; no man was therefore more liable to contradictory judgments. Though capable, in order to win that black ribbon which physicians ought never to have solicited, of dropping a prayer-book from his pocket in some room at the palace, it was more because in his heart he sneered at all things. He had the deepest contempt for men, having examined them from head to foot, having detected their veritable being through all the acts of existence, the most solemn and the most insignificant. In great men great qualities often support and require each other. Though some among these Colossi may have more faculty than mind, their minds are nevertheless more enlightened than that of others of whom the world says simply, “They are men of mind.” All genius presupposes a moral insight; that insight may be applied to some specialty, but whose

can see a flower can see the sun. The story is told of Desplein that when he heard a diplomate, whose life he had saved, asking "How is the Emperor?" he replied, "The courtier returns, the man will follow," — proving that he was not only a great surgeon and a great physician, but wonderfully wise and witty. So the patient and assiduous student of humanity will admit the exorbitant claims of Desplein, and will think him, as he thought himself, fit to be as great a statesman as he was a surgeon.

Among the enigmas offered to the eyes of contemporaries by Desplein's life we have chosen one of the most interesting, because of its final word, which may, perhaps, vindicate his memory from certain accusations.

Of all the pupils whom the great surgeon had taught in his hospital, Horace Bianchon was the one to whom he was most attached. Before becoming a house pupil at the Hôtel-Dieu, Horace Bianchon was a medical student living in a miserable *pension* in the Latin quarter, known under the name of the Maison Vauquer. There the poor young fellow felt the assaults of bitter poverty, that species of crucible from which great talents issue pure and incorruptible as diamonds which can bear all blows and never break. From the strong fires of their vehement passions such natures acquire an uncompromising rectitude; they gain the habit of those struggles which are the lot of genius through constant toil, in

the dull round of which they are forced to keep their balked appetites.

Horace was an honorable young man, incapable of paltering with his sense of duty; given to deeds, not words; ready to pawn his cloak for a friend, or to give him his time and his nights in watching. Horace was, indeed, one of those friends who care nothing for what they receive in exchange for what they give, sure of finding a return in their hearts far greater than the value of their gift. Most of his friends felt that inward respect for him which virtue without assumption inspires, and many among them feared his censure. Horace displayed his fine qualities without conceit. Neither a puritan nor a sermonizer, he gave advice with an oath, and was ready enough for a "*tronçon de chière lie*" when occasion offered. A jolly comrade, no more prudish than a cuirassier, frank and open, — not as a sailor, for sailors now-a-days are wily diplomats, — but like a brave young fellow with nothing to conceal in his life, he walked the earth with his head up and his thoughts happy. To express him in one sentence, Horace was the Pylades of more than one Orestes, creditors being in these days the nearest approach to the ancient Furies. He carried his poverty with an easy gayety which is perhaps one of the greatest elements of courage, and like all those who have nothing he contracted few debts. Sober as

a camel, agile as a deer, he was firm in his ideas, and in his conduct. Bianchon's successful life may be said to have begun on the day when the illustrious surgeon became fully aware of the virtues and the defects which made Doctor Horace Bianchon so doubly dear to his friends.

When a clinical chief takes a young man into his rounds that young man has, as they say, his foot in the stirrup. Desplein always took Bianchon with him for the sake of his assistance when he went among his opulent patients, where many a fee dropped into the pupil's pouch, and where, little by little, the mysteries of Parisian life revealed themselves to his provincial eyes. Desplein kept him in his study during consultations and employed him there; sometimes he sent him travelling with a rich patient to baths; in short, he provided him with a practice. The result was that, after a time, the autocrat of surgery had an *alter ego*. These two men — one at the summit of science and of all honors, enjoying a large fortune and a great fame; the other, the modest omega, without either fame or fortune — became intimates. The great Desplein told his pupil everything; the pupil knew what woman had been seated in a chair beside the master, or on the famous sofa which was in the study and on which Desplein slept; Bianchon knew the mysteries of that temperament, half-lion, half-bull, which finally expanded and amplified

beyond all reason the great man's chest, and caused his death by enlargement of the heart. He studied the eccentricities of that busy life, the schemes of that sordid avarice, the hopes of the politic man hidden in the scientific man; he was therefore fitted to detect the deceptions, had any existed, in the sole sentiment buried in a heart that was less hard than hardened.

One day Bianchon told Desplein that a poor water-carrier in the quartier Saint-Jacques had a horrible disease caused by over-work and poverty; this poor Auvergnat had eaten nothing but potatoes during the severe winter of 1821. Desplein left all his patients and rushed off, followed by Bianchon, and took the poor man himself to a private hospital established by the famous Dubois, in the faubourg Saint-Denis. He attended the man personally, and when he recovered gave him enough money to buy a horse and a water-cart. This Auvergnat was remarkable for an original act. One of his friends fell ill, and he took him at once to Desplein, saying to his benefactor, "I would n't hear of his going to any one else." Gruff as he was, Desplein pressed the water-carrier's hand. "Bring them all to me," he said; and he put the friend in the Hôtel-Dieu, where he took extreme care of him. Bianchon had already noticed several times the evident predilection his chief felt for an Auvergnat, and es-

pecially for a water-carrier, but as Desplein's pride was in the management of his hospital cases the pupil saw nothing really strange in the incident.

One day, crossing the place Saint-Sulpice, Bianchon caught sight of his master entering the church about nine o'clock in the morning. Desplein, who at that time of his life went everywhere in his cabriolet, was on foot, and was slipping along by the rue du Petit-Lion as if in quest of some questionable resort. Naturally seized with curiosity, the pupil, who knew the opinions of his master, slipped into Saint-Sulpice himself, and was not a little amazed to see the great Desplein, that atheist without pity even for the angels who so little require a scalpel and cannot have stomach-aches or fistulas, in short, that bold scoffer, humbly kneeling — where? in the chapel of the Virgin, before whom he was hearing a mass, paying for the service, giving money for the poor, and as serious in demeanor as if preparing for an operation.

“Heavens!” thought Bianchon, whose amazement was beyond all bounds. “If I had seen him holding one of the ropes of the canopy at the Fête-Dieu I should have known it was all a joke; but here, at this hour, alone, without witnesses! Certainly it is something to think about.”

Not wishing to seem to spy upon the great surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu, Bianchon went away. It so chanced.

that Desplein asked him to dine with him that day, away from home, at a restaurant. By the time the dessert appeared Bianchon had reached by clever stages the topic of religious services, and called the mass a farce and a mummery.

“A farce,” said Desplein, “which has cost Christianity more blood than all the battles of Napoleon and all the leeches of Broussais. The mass is a papal invention based on the *Hoc est corpus*, and dates back to the sixth century only. What torrents of blood had to flow to establish the Fête-Dieu, by the institution of which the court of Rome sought to confirm its victory in the matter of the Real Presence, — a schism which kept the church in hot water for three centuries! The wars of the Comte de Toulouse and the Albigenses were the sequel of it. The Vaudois and the Albigenses both refused to accept that innovation —”

And Desplein launched with all an atheist's ardor into a flux of Voltairean sarcasm, or, to be more exact, into a wretched imitation of the “Citateur.”

“Whew!” thought Bianchon; “where's the man who was on his knees this morning?”

He was silent, for he began to doubt whether he had really seen his chief at Saint-Sulpice after all. Desplein would surely never have troubled himself to deceive him. They knew each other too well, had exchanged thoughts or questions fully as serious, and discussed

systems *de natura rerum*, probing them or dissecting them with the knife and scalpel of unbelief.

Six months went by. Bianchon took no outward notice of this circumstance, though it remained stamped in his memory. One day a doctor belonging to the Hôtel-Dieu took Desplein by the arm in Bianchon's presence as if to question him, and said, —

“Why did you go to Saint-Sulpice to-day, my dear master?”

“To see a priest with caries of the knee whom Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême did me the honor to recommend to me,” replied Desplein.

The doctor was satisfied, but not so Bianchon.

“Ha! he went to see a stiff knee in a church, did he?” thought the pupil. “He went to hear his mass.”

Bianchon resolved to watch Desplein. He recollected the day and hour at which he had seen him entering Saint-Sulpice, and he determined to return the next year at the same time and see if he should surprise him in the same place. If so, then the periodicity of his devotion would warrant scientific investigation; for it was impossible to expect in such a man a positive contradiction between thought and action.

The following year, at the time named, Bianchon, who was now no longer Desplein's pupil, saw the surgeon's cabriolet stop at the corner of the rue de

Tournon and the rue du Petit-Lion, from which point his friend slipped jesuitically along the wall of the church, where he again entered and heard mass before the altar of the Virgin. Yes, it assuredly was Desplein, the surgeon-in-chief, the atheist *in petto*, the pietist by chance. The plot thickened. The persistency of the illustrious surgeon added a complication.

When Desplein had left the church, Bianchon went up to the verger, who was rearranging the altar, and asked him if that gentleman were in the habit of coming there.

"It is twenty years since I came here," said the verger, "and ever since then Monsieur Desplein comes four times a year to hear this mass. He founded it."

"A mass founded by him!" thought Bianchon as he walked away. "It is a greater mystery than the Immaculate Conception,— a thing, in itself, which would make any doctor an unbeliever."

Some time went by before Doctor Bianchon, though Desplein's friend, was in a position to speak to him of this singularity of his life. When they met in consultation or in society it was difficult to find that moment of confidence and solitude in which they could sit with their feet on the andirons, and their heads on the back of their chairs, and tell their secrets as two men do at such times. At last, however, after the revolution of 1830, when the populace attacked the Archbishop's

palace, when republican instigations drove the crowd to destroy the gilded crosses which gleamed like flashes of lightning among the many roofs of that ocean of houses, when unbelief, keeping pace with the riot, strutted openly in the streets, Bianchon again saw Desplein entering Saint-Sulpice. He followed him and knelt beside him, but his friend made no sign and showed not the least surprise. Together they heard the mass.

“Will you tell me, my dear friend,” said Bianchon, when they had left the church, “the reason for this pious performance? This is the third time I have caught you going to mass, you! You must tell me what this mystery means, and explain the discrepancy between your opinions and your conduct. You don’t believe, but you go to mass! My dear master, I hold you bound to answer me.”

“I am like a great many pious people, — men who are dceply religious to all appearance, but who are really as much atheists at heart as you or I —”

And he went on with a torrent of sarcasms on certain political personages, the best known of whom presents to this century a new and living edition of the Tartufe of Molière.

“I am not talking to you about that,” said Bianchon; “I want to know the reason for what you have just done; and why you founded that mass?”

“Ah, well! my dear friend,” replied Desplein, “I am on the verge of my grave, and I can afford to tell you the events of my early life.”

Just then Bianchon and the great surgeon were passing through the rue des Quatre-Vents, one of the most horrible streets in Paris. Desplein pointed to the sixth story of a house that looked like an obelisk, the gate of which opened upon a passage-way at the end of which was a winding stair lighted by holes in the planked side of it. It was a greenish-looking house, occupied on the ground-floor by a furniture-dealer, and seeming to harbor on each story some different form of poverty. Desplein threw up his arm with an energetic action and said to Bianchon, “I once lived up there for two years.”

“I know the house; d’Arthez lived in it. I went there nearly every day in my early youth; we used to call it the ‘harbor of great men.’ Well, what next?”

“The mass I have just heard is connected with events which happened when I lived in the garret where you say d’Arthez lived, — that one, where you see the clothes-line and the linen above the flower-pots. My beginnings were so hard, my dear Bianchon, that I can bear away the palm of Parisian sufferings from every one, no matter who. I have endured all, — hunger, thirst, the want of a penny, of linen, boots, all, even the worst that poverty can bring. I have blown

upon my frozen fingers in that harbor of great men, which I should like now to see again with you. I have worked there a whole winter and seen the vapor issuing from my head just as you see horses smoking in frosty weather.

“I don't know where a man can take his stand and find support against a life like that. I was alone, without help, without a sou to buy books, or to pay the costs of my medical education; having no friend to understand me, my irascible temper, uneasy and touchy as it is, did me harm. No one saw in my irritable ways the evidence of the anxiety and toil of a man who from the lowest social state is struggling to reach the surface. But I had, — and this I can say to you before whom there is no need that I should drape myself, — I had that understratum of right feelings and keen sensibility which will always be the attribute of men who are strong enough to mount a height, no matter what it is, after paddling long in the swamps of misery. I could ask nothing of my family, nor of my native town, beyond the insufficient allowance that they made me.

“Well, at this time of my life, I made my breakfast of a roll sold to me by the baker of the rue du Petit-Lion at half-price, because it was a day or two days old, and I crumbled it into some milk. So my morning repast cost me exactly two sous. I dined, every other

day only, in a pension where the dinner cost sixteen sous. Thus I spent no more than ten sous a day. You know as well as I do what care I had to take of my clothes and my boots! I really can't tell whether we suffer more in after years from the treachery of a tried friend than you and I have suffered from the smiling grin of a crack in our boots, or the threadbare look of a coat-sleeve. I drank nothing but water, and I held the cafés in reverence. Zoppi seemed to me the promised land, where the Luculluses of the Latin quarter alone had the right of entrance. 'Shall I ever,' I used to say to myself, 'drink a cup of coffee there, with cream, and play a game of dominoes?'

"So I let loose upon my work the rage my misery caused me. I tried to possess myself of positive knowledge; so as to have a vast personal value, and thus deserve distinction when the day came that I should issue from my nothingness. I consumed more oil than bread; the lamp which lighted me during those toilsome nights cost me more than all my food. The struggle was long, obstinate, and without alleviation. I awakened no sympathy in any one about me. To have friends we must be friendly with young men, we must have a few sons to tittle with, we must frequent the places where other students go; but I had nothing! Who is there in Paris who realizes that nothing *is nothing*? When I was forced at times to reveal my poverty my throat

contracted just as it does with our patients, who then imagine that a ball is rolling up from the œsophagus to the larynx. In later years I have met these people, born rich, who, never having wanted for anything, knew nothing of the problem of this rule of three : A young man *is* to crime what a five-franc piece *is* to *x*. These gilded imbeciles would say to me : ‘ But why do you run in debt? why do you saddle yourself with obligations?’ They remind me of the princess who, when she heard the people were dying for want of bread, remarked : ‘ Why don’t they buy cake?’

“ Well, well, I should like to see one of those rich fellows who complain that I charge them too dear for my operations, — yes, I should like to see one of them alone in Paris, without a penny to bless himself with, without a friend, without credit, and forced to work with his five fingers to get food. What would he do? where would he go to appease his hunger? — Bianchon, if you have sometimes seen me hard and bitter, it was when I was setting my early sufferings against the unfeeling selfishness of which I have had ten thousand proofs in the upper ranks of life; or else I was thinking of the obstacles which hatred, envy, jealousy, and calumny had raised between success and me. In Paris, when certain persons see you about to put your foot in the stirrup some of them will catch you by the tails of your coat, others will loosen the buckles of the belly-

band to give you a fall which will crack your skull ; that one will pull the nails out of the horses' shoes, that other will steal your whip ; the least treacherous is he whom you see approaching with a pistol to blow out your brains.

“ Ah ! my dear lad, you have talent enough to be soon plunged into the horrible strife, the incessant warfare which mediocrity wages against superior men. If you lose twenty-five louis some evening the next day you are accused of being a gambler, and your best friends will spread the news that you have lost twenty-five thousand francs. Have a headache, and they'll say you are insane. Get angry, and they'll call you a Timon. If, for the purpose of resisting this battalion of pygmies, you call up within you all the powers you possess, your best friends will cry out that you want to destroy everything, that you want to rule, to tyrannize. In short, your fine qualities are called defects, your defects vices, and your vices crimes. Though you may save a patient you will have the credit of killing him ; if he recovers, you have sacrificed his future life to the present ; if he does n't die, he soon will. Slip, and you are down ! Make an invention, claim your right to it, and you are a quarrelsome knave, a stingy man, who won't let the young ones have a chance.

“ And so, my dear fellow, if I don't believe in God, still less do I believe in man. Don't you know that

there is in me a Desplein who is totally different from the Desplein whom the world traduces? But don't let us drag that muddy pond.

“ Well, to go back, I lived in that house, and I was working to pass my first examination and I had n't a brass farthing. You know! — I had reached that last extremity where a man says, ‘I'll pawn!’ I had one hope. I expected a trunk of underclothing from my home, a present from some old aunts, who, knowing nothing of Paris, think about your shirts, and imagine that with an allowance of thirty francs a month their nephew must be living on ortolans. The trunk arrived one day when I was at the hospital; the carriage cost forty francs! The porter, a German shoemaker who lived in the loft, paid the money and kept the trunk. I walked about the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the rue de L'École-de-Médecine without being able to invent any stratagem by which I could get possession of that trunk without paying the forty francs, which I could, of course, pay at once as soon as I had sold the underclothes. My stupidity was enough to prove that I had no other vocation than that of surgery. My dear Bianchon, sensitive souls whose forces work in the higher spheres of thought, lack the spirit of intrigue which is so fertile in resources and schemes; their good genius is chance, — they don't seek, they find.

“That night I entered the house just as my neighbor, a water-carrier named Bourgeat, from Saint-Flour, came home. We knew each other as two tenants must when their rooms are on the same landing, and they hear one another snore, and cough, and dress, and at length become accustomed to one another. My neighbor told me that the proprietor of the house, to whom I owed three months rent, had turned me out; I was warned to quit the next day. He himself was also told to leave on account of his occupation. I passed the most dreadful night of my life. How could I hire a porter to carry away my few poor things, my books? how could I pay him? where could I go? These insoluble questions I said over and over to myself in tears, just as madmen repeat their sing-song. I fell asleep. Ah! poverty alone has the divine slumber full of glorious dreams!

“The next morning, as I was eating my bowlful of bread and milk, Bourgeat came in, and said in his patois, ‘Monsieur, I’m a poor man, a foundling from the hospital at Saint-Flour, without father or mother, and I’m not rich enough to marry. You are no better off for friends, and relations, and money, as I judge. Now listen; there is a hand-cart out there which I have hired for two sous an hour; it will hold all our things; if you like, we can go and find some cheap lodging which will hold us both, as we are both

turned out of here. After all, you know, it isn't a terrestrial paradise.' 'I know that,' I said, 'my good Bourgeat, but I am in a great quandary; I have a trunk downstairs which contains at least three hundred francs' worth of linen, with which I could pay the proprietor if I could only get it from the porter, to whom I owe forty francs for the carriage.' 'Bah!' he cried, cheerily, 'I've got a few pennies tucked away;' and he pulled out a dirty old leather purse. 'Keep your linen; you'll want it.'

'Bourgeat paid my three months' rent, and his own, and the porter. He put all our things and the trunk into his hand-cart, and dragged it through the streets, stopping before each house where a sign was up. Then I went in to see if the place would suit us. At mid-day we were still wandering round the Latin quarter without having found what we wanted. The price was the great obstacle. Bourgeat invited me to breakfast in a wine-shop, leaving the hand-cart before the door. Towards evening, I found in the Cour de Rohan, passage du Commerce, on the top-floor of a house, under the roof, two rooms, separated by the staircase. For a yearly rent of sixty francs each, we were able to take them. So there we were, housed, my humble friend and I. We dined together. Bourgeat, who earned about fifty sous a day, possessed something like three hundred francs. He was close upon realizing his great

ambition, which was to buy a horse and a water-cart. Learning my situation, for he wormed my secrets out of me, with a depth of cunning and an air of good-fellowship the remembrance of which to this day stirs every fibre of my heart, he renounced, for a time, the ambition of his life. Bourgeat never attained it; he sacrificed his three hundred francs to my future."

Desplein clasped the arm he held, violently.

"He gave me the money I needed for my examinations. That man — my friend — felt that I had a mission; that the needs of my intellect were greater than his own. He busied himself with me; he called me his son; he lent me the money I needed to buy books; he came in sometimes, very softly, to watch me at work; he substituted, with the forethought of a mother, a nourishing and sufficient diet for the poor fare to which I had been so long condemned. Bourgeat, a man then about forty years of age, had a middle-aged burgher face, a prominent forehead, and a head which a painter might have chosen for a model for Lyeurgus. The poor soul had a heart full of unplaced affection. He had never been loved except by a dog which had recently died, and of which he often spoke to me, asking whether I thought the Church would be willing to say masses for the repose of its soul. That dog, he said, was a true Christian, who for twelve years had gone with him to church and never barked, listening to the organ

without opening his jaws, and crouching by him when he knelt as if he prayed also.

“That man, that Auvergne water-carrier, spent all his affection upon me. He accepted me as a lonely, suffering human being; he became my mother, my delicate benefactor; in short, the ideal of that virtue which delights in its own work. When I met him about his business in the street he flung me a glance of inconceivable generosity; he pretended to walk as if he carried nothing; he showed his happiness in seeing me in good health and well-clothed. His devotion to me was that of the people, — the love of a grisette for one above her. Bourgeat did my errands, woke me at night when I had to be called, cleaned my lamp, polished my floor; as good a servant as a kind father, and as clean as an English girl. He kept house. Like Philopœmen, he sawed our wood, and gave to all his actions the simple dignity of toil; for he seemed to comprehend that the object ennobled all.

“When I left that noble man to enter the Hôtel-Dieu as an indoor pupil, he suffered dark distress from the thought that he could no longer live with me; but he consoled himself with the idea of laying by the money required for the expenses of my thesis, and he made me promise to come and see him on all my days out. If you will look up my thesis you will find that it is dedicated to him.

“During the last year I was in hospital I earned money enough to return all I owed to that noble Auvergnat, with which I bought him his horse and water-cart. He was very angry when he found out I had deprived myself of my earnings, and yet delighted to see his desires realized; he laughed and scolded, looked at his cart and at his horse, and wiped his eyes, saying to me: ‘It is all wrong. Oh, what a fine cart! You had no right to do it; that horse is as strong as an Auvergnat.’ Never did I see anything as touching as that scene. Bourgeat positively insisted on buying me that case of instruments mounted in silver which you have seen in my study, and which is to me the most precious of my possessions. Though absolutely intoxicated by my success, he never by word or gesture let the thought escape him, ‘It is to me that he owes it.’ And yet, without him, misery would have killed me.

“The poor man had wrecked himself for me; all he ate was a little bread rubbed with garlic, that I might have coffee for my studious nights. He fell ill. You can well believe that I spent nights at his bedside. I pulled him through the first time, but he had a relapse two years later, and, in spite of all my care, he died. No king was ever cared for as he was. Yes, Bianchon, to save that life I tried amazing things. I longed to make him live as the witness of his own work; to realize his hopes, to satisfy the sole gratitude that ever

entered my heart, to extinguish a fire which burns there still.

“ Bourgeat,” resumed Desplein, with visible emotion, “ my second father, died in my arms, leaving all he possessed to me, in a will drawn up by a street writer and dated the year we went to live in the Cour de Rohan. That man had the faith of his kind; he loved the Blessed Virgin as he would have loved his wife. An ardent Catholic, he never said one word to me about my irreligion. When he was in danger of death he asked me to spare nothing that he might have the succor of the Church. Every day masses were said for him. Often during the night he would tell me of his fears for the future; he thought he had not lived devoutly enough. Poor man! he had toiled from morning till night. To whom else does heaven belong, — if indeed there is a heaven? He received the last offices of religion, like the saint that he was, and his death was worthy of his life. I, alone, followed him to the grave. When the earth covered my sole benefactor I sought a way to pay my debt to him. He had neither family, nor friends, nor wife, nor children, but, he believed! he had a deep religious belief; what right had I to dispute it? He had timidly spoken to me of masses for the repose of the dead, but he never imposed that duty upon me, thinking, no doubt, it would seem like payment for his services. The moment I was able to

found a mass I gave Saint-Sulpice the necessary sum for four yearly services. As the sole thing I can offer to Bourgeat is the satisfaction of his pious wishes, I go in his name and recite for him the appointed prayers at the beginning of each season. I say with the sincerity of a doubter: 'My God, if there be a sphere where thou dost place after death the souls of the perfect, think of the good Bourgeat; and if there is anything to be suffered for him, grant me those sufferings that he may the sooner enter what, they say, is heaven.'

"That, my dear friend, is all a man of my opinions can do. God must be a good sort of devil, and he'll not blame me. I swear to you I would give all I am worth if Bourgeat's belief could enter my brain."

Bianchon, who took care of Desplein in his last illness, dares not affirm that the great surgeon died an atheist. Believers will like to think that the humble water-carrier opened to him the gates of heaven, as he had once opened to him the portals of that terrestrial temple on the pediment of which are inscribed the words: —

"TO HER GREAT MEN, A GRATEFUL COUNTRY!"

LA GRANDE BRETÈCHE.

“Ah! Madame,” replied Doctor Horace Bianchon to the lady at whose house he was supping, “it is true that I have many terrible histories in my repertory; but every tale has its due hour in a conversation, according to the clever saying reported by Chamfort and said to the Duc de Fronsac: “There are ten bottles of champagne between your joke and the present moment.”

“But it is past midnight; what better hour could you have?” said the mistress of the house.

“Yes, tell us, Monsieur Bianchon,” urged the assembled company.

At a gesture from the complying doctor, silence reigned.

“About a hundred yards from Vendôme,” he said, “on the banks of the Loir, is an old brown house, covered with very steep roofs, and so completely isolated that there is not so much as an evil-smelling tannery, nor a shabby inn such as you see at the entrance of all little towns, in its neighborhood. In

front of this dwelling is a garden overlooking the river, where the box edgings, once carefully clipped, which bordered the paths, now cross them and straggle as they fancy. A few willows with their roots in the Loir have made a rapid growth, like the enclosing hedge, and together they half hide the house. Plants which we call weeds drape the bank towards the river with their beautiful vegetation. Fruit-trees, neglected for half a score of years, no longer yield a product, and their shoots and suckers have formed an undergrowth. The espaliers are like a hornbeam hedge. The paths, formerly gravelled, are full of purslain; so that, strictly speaking, there are no paths at all.

“From the crest of the mountain, on which hang the ruins of the old castle of Vendôme (the only spot whence the eye can look down into this enclosure) we say to ourselves that at an earlier period, now difficult to determine, this corner of the earth was the delight of some gentleman devoted to roses and tulips, in a word, to horticulture, but above all possessing a keen taste for good fruits. An arbor is still standing, or rather the remains of one, and beneath it is a table which time has not yet completely demolished.

“From the aspect of this garden, now no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces can be inferred, just as we infer the life of some worthy from the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the sad

and tender ideas which take possession of the soul, a sundial on the wall bears this inscription, Christian yet bourgeois, 'ULTIMAM COGITA.' The roofs are dilapidated, the blinds always closed, the balconies are filled with swallows' nests, the gates are locked. Tall herbs and grasses trace in green lines the chinks and crevices of the stone portico; the locks are rusty. Sun and moon, summer and winter and snow have rotted the wood, warped the planks, and worn away the paint. The gloomy silence is unbroken save by the birds, the cats, the martens, the rats, the mice, all free to scamper or fly, and to fight, and to eat themselves up.

“An invisible hand has written the word ‘MYSTERY’ everywhere. If, impelled by curiosity, you wish to look at this house, on the side towards the road you will see a large gate with an arched top, in which the children of the neighborhood have made large holes. This gate, as I heard later, had been disused for ten years. Through these irregular holes you can observe the perfect harmony which exists between the garden side, and the courtyard side of the premises. The same neglect everywhere. Lines of grass surround the paving-stones. Enormous cracks furrow the walls, the blackened eaves of which are festooned with peltitory. The steps of the portico are disjointed, the rope of the bell is rotten, the gutters are dropping apart. What fire from heaven has fallen here? What tribunal

has ordained that salt be cast upon this dwelling? Has God been mocked here; or France betrayed? These are the questions we ask as we stand there; the reptiles crawl about but they give no answer.

“This empty and deserted house is a profound enigma, whose solution is known to none. It was formerly a small fief, and is called *La Grande Bretèche*. During my stay at Vendôme, where Desplein had sent me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling was one of my keenest pleasures. It was better than a ruin. A ruin possesses memories of positive authenticity; but this habitation, still standing, though slowly demolished by an avenging hand, contained some secret, some mysterious thought, — it betrayed at least a strange caprice.

“More than once of an evening I jumped the hedge, now a tangle, which guarded the enclosure. I braved the scratches; I walked that garden without a master, that property which was neither public nor private; for hours I stayed there contemplating its decay. Not even to obtain the history which underlay (and to which no doubt was due) this strange spectacle would I have asked a single question of any gossiping countryman. Standing there I invented enchanting tales; I gave myself up to debauches of melancholy which fascinated me. Had I known the reason, perhaps a common one, for this strange desertion, I should have

lost the unwritten poems with which I intoxicated myself. To me this sanctuary evoked the most varied images of human life darkened by sorrows ; sometimes it was a cloister without the nuns ; sometimes a graveyard and its peace, without the dead who talk to you in epitaphs ; to-day the house of the leper, to-morrow that of the Atrides ; but above all was it the provinces with their composed idées, their hour-glass life.

“ Often I wept there, but I never smiled. More than once an involuntary terror seized me, as I heard above my head the muffled whirr of a ringdove’s wings hurrying past. The soil is damp ; care must be taken against the lizards, the vipers, the frogs, which wander about with the wild liberty of nature ; above all, it is well not to fear cold, for there are moments when you feel an icy mantle laid upon your shoulders like the hand of the Commander on the shoulder of Don Juan. One evening I shuddered ; the wind had caught and turned a rusty vane. Its creak was like a moan issuing from the house ; at a moment, too, when I was ending a gloomy drama in which I explained to myself the monumental dolor of that scene.

“ That night I returned to my inn, a prey to gloomy thoughts. After I had supped the landlady entered my room with a mysterious air, and said to me, ‘ Monsieur, Monsieur Regnault is here.’

“ ‘ Who is Monsieur Regnault?’

“ ‘Is it possible that Monsieur does n’t know Monsieur Regnault? Ah, how funny!’ she said, leaving the room.

“ ‘Suddenly I beheld a long, slim man, clothed in black, holding his hat in his hand, who presented himself, much like a ram about to leap on a rival, and showed me a retreating forehead, a small, pointed head and a livid face, in color somewhat like a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for the usher of a minister. This unknown personage wore an old coat much worn in the folds, but he had a diamond in the frill of his shirt, and gold earrings in his ears.

“ ‘Monsieur, to whom have I the honor of speaking?’ I said.

“ ‘He took a chair, sat down before my fire, laid his hat on my table and replied, rubbing his hands: ‘Ah! it is very cold. Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault.’

“ ‘I bowed, saying to myself: ‘*Il bondo cani!* seek!’

“ ‘I am,’ he said, ‘the notary of Vendôme.’

“ ‘Delighted, monsieur,’ I replied, ‘but I am not in the way of making my will, — for reasons, alas, too well-known to me.’

“ ‘One moment!’ he resumed, raising his hand as if to impose silence; ‘Permit me, monsieur, permit me! I have learned that you sometimes enter the garden of La Grande Bretèche and walk there —’

“ ‘ Yes, monsieur.’

“ ‘ One moment!’ he said, repeating his gesture. ‘ That action constitutes a misdemeanor. Monsieur, I come in the name and as testamentary executor of the late Comtesse de Merret to beg you to discontinue your visits. One moment! I am not a Turk; I do not wish to impute a crime to you. Besides, it is quite excusable that you, a stranger, should be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to let the handsomest house in Vendôme go to ruin. Nevertheless, monsieur, as you seem to be a person of education, you no doubt know that the law forbids trespassers on enclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But the state in which that house is left may well excuse your curiosity. I should be only too glad to leave you free to go and come as you liked there, but charged as I am to execute the wishes of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to request that you do not again enter that garden. I myself, monsieur, have not, since the reading of the will, set foot in that house, which, as I have already had the honor to tell you, I hold under the will of Madame de Merret. We have only taken account of the number of the doors and windows so as to assess the taxes which I pay annually from the funds left by the late countess for that purpose. Ah, monsieur, that will made a great deal of noise in Vendôme!’

“ There the worthy man paused to blow his nose.

I respected his loquacity, understanding perfectly that the testamentary bequest of Madame de Merret had been the most important event of his life, the head and front of his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. So then, I must bid adieu to my beautiful reveries, my romances! I was not so rebellious as to deprive myself of getting the truth, as it were officially, out of the man of law, so I said, —

“ ‘Monsieur, if it is not indiscreet, may I ask the reason of this singularity?’ ”

“ At these words a look which expressed the pleasure of a man who rides a hobby passed over Monsieur Regnault’s face. He pulled up his shirt-collar with a certain conceit, took out his snuff-box, opened it, offered it to me, and on my refusal, took a strong pinch himself. He was happy. A man who has n’t a hobby does n’t know how much can be got out of life. A hobby is the exact medium between a passion and a monomania. At that moment I understood Sterne’s fine expression to its fullest extent, and I formed a complete idea of the joy with which my Unele Toby — Trim assisting — bestrode his war-horse.

“ ‘Monsieur,’ said Monsieur Regnault, ‘I was formerly head-clerk to Maître Roguin in Paris. An excellent lawyer’s office of which you have doubtless heard? No! And yet a most unfortunate failure made it, I may say, celebrated. Not having the means to

buy a practice in Paris at the price to which they rose in 1816, I came here to Vendôme, where I have relations, — among them a rich aunt, who gave me her daughter in marriage.’

“ Here he made a slight pause, and then resumed : —

“ ‘ Three months after my appointment was ratified by Monseigneur the Keeper of the Seals, I was sent for one evening just as I was going to bed (I was not then married) by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, then living in her château at Merret. Her lady’s-maid, an excellent girl who is now serving in this inn, was at the door with the countess’s carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you, monsieur, that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to die in Paris about two months before I came here. He died a miserable death from excesses of all kinds, to which he gave himself up. You understand? Well, the day of his departure Madame la Comtesse left La Grande Bretèche, and dismantled it. They do say that she even burned the furniture, and the carpets, and all appurtenances whatsoever and wheresoever contained on the premises leased to the said — Ah! beg pardon; what am I saying? I thought I was dictating a lease. Well, monsieur, she burned everything, they say, in the meadow at Merret. Were you ever at Merret, monsieur?’

“ Not waiting for me to speak, he answered for me : ‘ No. Ah! it is a fine spot? For three months, or

thereabouts,' he continued, nodding his head, 'Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse had been living at La Grande Bretèche in a very singular way. They admitted no one to the house; madame lived on the ground-floor, and monsieur on the first floor. After Madame la Comtesse was left alone she never went to church. Later, in her own château she refused to see the friends who came to visit her. She changed greatly after she left La Grande Bretèche and came to Merret. That dear woman (I say dear, though I never saw her but once, because she gave me this diamond), — that good lady was very ill; no doubt she had given up all hope of recovery, for she died without calling in a doctor; in fact, some of our ladies thought she was not quite right in her mind. Consequently, monsieur, my curiosity was greatly excited when I learned that Madame de Merret needed my services; and I was not the only one deeply interested; that very night, though it was late, the whole town knew I had gone to Merret.'

“The good man paused a moment to arrange his facts, and then continued: ‘The lady’s maid answered rather vaguely the questions which I put to her as we drove along; she did, however, tell me that her mistress had received the last sacraments that day from the curate of Merret, and that she was not likely to live through the night. I reached the château about

eleven o'clock. I went up the grand staircase. After passing through a number of dark and lofty rooms, horribly cold and damp, I entered the state bedroom where Madame la Comtesse was lying. In consequence of the many stories that were told about this lady (really, monsieur, I should never end if I related all of them) I expected to find her a fascinating coquette. Would you believe it, I could scarcely see her at all in the huge bed in which she lay. It is true that the only light in that vast room, with friezes of the old style powdered with dust enough to make you sneeze on merely looking at them, was one Argand lamp. Ah! but you say you have never been at Merret. Well, monsieur, the bed was one of those old-time beds with a high tester covered with flowered chintz. A little night-table stood by the bed, and on it I noticed a copy of the "Imitation of Christ."

" 'Allow me a parenthesis,' he said, interrupting himself. 'I bought that book subsequently, also the lamp, and presented them to my wife. In the room was a large sofa for the woman who was taking care of Madame de Merret, and two chairs. That was all. No fire. The whole would not have made ten lines of an inventory. Ah! my dear monsieur, could you have seen her as I saw her then, in that vast room hung with brown tapestry, you would have imagined you were in the pages of a novel. It was glacial, — better than that,

funereal,' added the worthy man, raising his arm theatrically and making a pause. Presently he resumed :

“ ‘ By dint of peering round and coming close to the bed I at length saw Madame de Merret, thanks to the lamp which happened to shine on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and looked like two hands joined together. Madame la Comtesse wore a lace cap, which, however, allowed me to see her fine hair, white as snow. She was sitting up in the bed, but apparently did so with difficulty. Her large black eyes, sunken no doubt with fever, and almost lifeless, hardly moved beneath the bones where the eyebrows usually grow. Her forehead was damp. Her fleshless hands were like bones covered with thin skin ; the veins and muscles could all be seen. She must once have been very handsome, but now I was seized with—I could n't tell you what feeling, as I looked at her. Those who buried her said afterwards that no living creature had ever been as wasted as she without dying. Well, it was awful to see. Some mortal disease had eaten up that woman till there was nothing left of her but a phantom. Her lips, of a pale violet, seemed not to move when she spoke. Though my profession had familiarized me with such scenes, in bringing me often to the bedside of the dying, to receive their last wishes, I must say that the tears and the anguish of families and friends which I have witnessed were as nothing compared to this solitary

woman in that vast building. I did not hear the slightest noise, I did not see the movement which the breathing of the dying woman would naturally give to the sheet that covered her; I myself remained motionless, looking at her in a sort of stupor. Indeed, I fancy I am there still. At last her large eyes moved; she tried to lift her right hand, which fell back upon the bed; then these words issued from her lips like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice, —

“ “I have awaited you with impatience.”

“ “Her cheeks colored. The effort to speak was great. The old woman who was watching her here rose and whispered in my ear: “Don’t speak; Madame la Comtesse is past hearing the slightest sound; you would only agitate her.” I sat down. A few moments later Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right arm and put it, not without great difficulty, under her bolster. She paused an instant; then she made a last effort and withdrew her hand which now held a sealed paper. Great drops of sweat rolled from her forehead.

“ “ “I give you my will,” she said. “Oh, my God! Oh!”

“ “That was all. She seized a crucifix which lay on her bed, pressed it to her lips and died. The expression of her fixed eyes still makes me shudder when I think of it. I brought away the will. When it was opened

I found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She bequeathed her whole property to the hospital of Vendôme, save and excepting certain bequests. The following disposition was made of La Grande Bretèche. I was directed to leave it in the state in which it was at the time of her death for a period of fifty years from the date of her decease; I was to forbid all access to it, by any and every one, no matter who; to make no repairs, and to put by from her estate a yearly sum to pay watchers, if they were necessary, to insure the faithful execution of these intentions. At the expiration of that time the estate was, if the testatrix's will had been carried out in all particulars, to belong to my heirs (because, as monsieur is doubtless well aware, notaries are forbidden by law to receive legacies); if otherwise, then La Grande Bretèche was to go to whoever might establish a right to it, but on condition of fulfilling certain orders contained in a codicil annexed to the will and not to be opened until the expiration of the fifty years. The will has never been attacked, consequently —

“Here the oblong notary, without finishing his sentence, looked at me triumphantly. I made him perfectly happy with a few compliments.

“ ‘Monsieur,’ I said, in conclusion, ‘you have so deeply impressed that scene upon me that I seem to see the dying woman, whiter than the sheets; those

glittering eyes horrify me; I shall dream of her all night. But you must have formed some conjectures as to the motive of that extraordinary will.'

“ ‘Monsieur,’ he replied, with comical reserve, ‘I never permit myself to judge of the motives of those who honor me with the gift of a diamond.’

“ However, I managed to unloose the tongue of the scrupulous notary so far that he told me, not without long digressions, certain opinions on the matter emanating from the wise-heads of both sexes whose judgments made the social law of Vendôme. But these opinions and observations were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I well-nigh went to sleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic story. The heavy manner and monotonous accent of the notary, who was no doubt in the habit of listening to himself and making his clients and compatriots listen to him, triumphed over my curiosity. Happily, he did at last go away.

“ ‘Ha, ha! monsieur,’ he said to me at the head of the stairs, ‘many persons would like to live their forty-five years longer, but, one moment!’—here he laid the forefinger of his right hand on his nose as if he meant to say, Now pay attention to this!—‘in order to do that, to do *that*, they ought to skip the sixties.’

“ I shut my door, the notary’s jest, which he thought very witty, having drawn me from my apathy; then I sat down in my armchair and put both feet on the

andirons. I was plunged in a romance à la Radcliffe, based on the notarial disclosures of Monsieur Regnault, when my door, softly opened by the hand of a woman, turned noiselessly on its hinges.

“I saw my landlady, a jovial, stout woman, with a fine, good-humored face, who had missed her true surroundings; she was from Flanders, and might have stepped out of a picture by Teniers.

“‘Well, monsieur,’ she said, ‘Monsieur Regnault has no doubt recited to you his famous tale of *La Grande Bretèche*?’

“‘Yes, Madame Lepas.’

“‘What did he tell you?’

“I repeated in a few words the dark and chilling story of Madame de Merret as imparted to me by the notary. At each sentence my landlady ran out her chin and looked at me with the perspicacity of an innkeeper, which combines the instinct of a policeman, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a shopkeeper.

“‘My dear Madame Lepas,’ I added, in conclusion, ‘you evidently know more than that. If not, why did you come up here to me?’

“‘On the word, now, of an honest woman, just as true as my name is Lepas—’

“‘Don’t swear, for your eyes are full of the secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret. What sort of man was he?’

“ ‘ Goodness ! Monsieur de Merret ? well, you see, he was a handsome man, so tall you never could see the top of him, — a very worthy gentleman from Picardy, who had, as you may say, a temper of his own ; and he knew it. He paid every one in cash so as to have no quarrels. But, I tell you, he could be quick. Our ladies thought him very pleasant.’

“ ‘ Because of his temper ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Perhaps,’ she replied. ‘ You know, monsieur, a man must have something to the fore, as they say, to marry a lady like Madame de Merret, who, without disparaging others, was the handsomest and the richest woman in Vendôme. She had an income of nearly twenty thousand francs. All the town was at the wedding. The bride was so dainty and captivating, a real little jewel of a woman. Ah ! they were a fine couple in those days !’

“ ‘ Was their home a happy one ? ’

“ ‘ Hum, hum ! yes and no, so far as any one can say ; for you know well enough that the like of us don’t live hand and glove with the like of them. Madame de Merret was a good woman and very charming, who no doubt had to bear a good deal from her husband’s temper ; we all liked her though she was rather haughty. Bah ! that was her bringing up, and she was born so. When people are noble — don’t you see ?’

“ ‘ Yes, but there must have been some terrible

catastrophe, for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to separate violently.'

“‘I never said there was a catastrophe, monsieur; I know nothing about it.’

“‘Very good; now I am certain that you know all.’

“‘Well, monsieur, I’ll tell you all I do know. When I saw Monsieur Regnault coming after you I knew he would tell you about Madame de Merret and La Grande Bretèche; and that gave me the idea of consulting monsieur, who seems to be a gentleman of good sense, incapable of betraying a poor woman like me, who has never done harm to any one, but who is, somehow, troubled in her conscience. I have never dared to say a word to the people about here, for they are all gossips, with tongues like steel blades. And there’s never been a traveller who has stayed as long as you have, monsieur, to whom I could tell all about the fifteen thousand francs—’

“‘My dear Madame Lepas,’ I replied, trying to stop the flow of words, ‘if your confidence is of a nature to compromise me, I would n’t hear it for worlds.’

“‘Oh, don’t be afraid,’ she said, interrupting me. ‘You’ll see—’

“‘This haste to tell made me quite certain I was not the first to whom my good landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be the sole repository, so I listened.

“ ‘Monsieur,’ she said, ‘when the Emperor sent the Spanish and other prisoners of war to Vendôme I lodged one of them (at the cost of the government), — a young Spaniard on parole. But in spite of his parole he had to report every day to the sub-prefect. He was a grandee of Spain, with a name that ended in *os* and in *dia*, like all Spaniards — Bagos de Férédia. I wrote his name on the register, and you can see it if you like. Oh, he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who, they tell me, are all ugly. He was n’t more than five feet two or three inches, but he was well made. He had pretty little hands which he took care of — ah, you should just have seen him! He had as many brushes for those hands as a woman has for her head. He had fine black hair, a fiery eye, a rather copper-colored skin, but it was pleasant to look at all the same. He wore the finest linen I ever saw on any one, and I have lodged princesses, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d’Abrantès, Monsieur Decazes and the King of Spain. He did n’t eat much; but he had such polite manners and was always so amiable that I could n’t find fault with him. Oh! I did really love him, though he never said four words a day to me; if any one spoke to him, he never answered, — that’s an oddity those grandees have, a sort of mania, so I’m told. He read his breviary like a priest, and he went to mass and to all the services regularly. Where

do you think he sat? close to the chapel of Madame de Merret. But as he took that place the first time he went to church nobody attached any importance to the fact, though it was remembered later. Besides, he never took his eyes off his prayer-book, poor young man!

“My jovial landlady paused a moment, overcome with her recollections; then she continued her tale:

“‘From that time on, monsieur, he used to walk up the mountain every evening to the ruins of the castle. It was his only amusement, poor man! and I dare say it recalled his own country; they say Spain is all mountains. From the first he was always late at night in coming in. I used to be uneasy at never seeing him before the stroke of midnight; but we got accustomed to his ways and gave him a key to the door, so that we didn’t have to sit up. It so happened that one of our grooms told us that one evening when he went to bathe his horses he thought he saw the grandee in the distance, swimming in the river like a fish. When he came in I told him he had better take care not to get entangled in the sedges; he seemed annoyed that any one had seen him in the water. Well, monsieur, one day, or rather, one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come in. He never returned. I looked about and into everything, and at last I found a writing in a table drawer where he had put away fifty of those Spanish gold coins called “portugaise,” which

bring a hundred francs apiece; there were also diamonds worth ten thousand francs sealed up in a little box. The paper said that in case he should not return some day, he bequeathed to us the money and the diamonds, with a request to found masses of thanksgiving to God for his escape and safety. In those days my husband was living, and he did everything he could to find the young man. But, it was the queerest thing! he found only the Spaniard's clothes under a big stone in a sort of shed on the banks of the river, on the castle side, just opposite to La Grande Bretèche. My husband went so early in the morning that no one saw him. He burned the clothes after we had read the letter, and gave out, as Comte Férédia requested, that he had fled. The sub-prefect sent the whole gendarmerie on his traces, but bless your heart! they never caught him. Lepas thought the Spaniard had drowned himself. But, monsieur, I never thought so. I think he was somehow mixed up in Madame de Merret's trouble; and I'll tell you why. Rosalie has told me that her mistress had a crucifix she valued so much that she was buried with it, and it was made of ebony and silver; now when Monsieur de Férédia first came to lodge with us he had just such a crucifix, but I soon missed it. Now, monsieur, what do you say? is n't it true that I need have no remorse about those fifteen thousand francs? are not they rightfully mine?'

“Of course they are. But how is it you have never questioned Rosalie?” I said.

“Oh, I have, monsieur; but I can get nothing out of her. That girl is a stone wall. She knows something, but there is no making her talk.”

“After a few more remarks, my landlady left me, a prey to a romantic curiosity, to vague and darkling thoughts, to a religious terror that was something like the awe which comes upon us when we enter by night a gloomy church and see in the distance beneath the arches a feeble light; a formless figure glides before us, the sweep of a robe — of priest or woman — is heard; we shudder. *La Grande Bretèche*, with its tall grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty railings, its barred gates, its deserted rooms, rose fantastically and suddenly before me. I tried to penetrate that mysterious dwelling and seek the knot of this most solemn history, this drama which had killed three persons.

“Rosalie became to my eyes the most interesting person in Vendôme. Examining her, I discovered the traces of an ever-present inward thought. In spite of the health which bloomed upon her dimpled face, there was in her some element of remorse, or of hope; her attitude bespoke a secret, like that of devotees who pray with ardor, or that of a girl who has killed her child and forever after hears its cry. And yet her pos-

tures were naïve, and even vulgar; her silly smile was surely not criminal; you would have judged her innocent if only by the large neckerchief of blue and red squares which covered her vigorous bust, clothed, confined, and set off by a gown of purple and white stripes. 'No,' thought I; 'I will not leave Vendôme without knowing the history of La Grande Bretèche. I'll even make love to Rosalie, if it is absolutely necessary.'

"'Rosalie!' I said to her one day.

"'What is it, monsieur?'

"'You are not married, are you?'

She trembled slightly.

"'Oh! when the fancy takes me to be unhappy there'll be no lack of men,' she said, laughing.

"She recovered instantly from her emotion, whatever it was; for all women, from the great lady to the chambermaid of an inn, have a self-possession of their own.

"'You are fresh enough and taking enough to please a lover,' I said, watching her. 'But tell me, Rosalie, why did you take a place at an inn after you left Madame de Méret? Did n't she leave you an annuity?'

"'Oh, yes, she did. But, monsieur, my place is the best in all Vendôme.'

"This answer was evidently what judges and lawyers call 'dilatatory.' Rosalie's position in this romantic history was like that of a square on a checkerboard; she

was at the very centre, as it were, of its truth and its interest; she seemed to me to be tied into the knot of it. The last chapter of the tale was in her, and, from the moment that I realized this, Rosalie became to me an object of attraction. By dint of studying the girl I came to find in her, as we do in every woman whom we make a principal object of our attention, that she had a host of good qualities. She was clean, and careful of herself, and therefore handsome. Some two or three weeks after the notary's visit I said to her, suddenly: 'Tell me all you know about Madame de Merfret.'

“‘Oh, no!’ she replied, in a tone of terror, ‘don't ask me that, monsieur.’

“I persisted in urging her. Her pretty face darkened, her bright color faded, her eyes lost their innocent, liquid light.

“‘Well!’ she said, after a pause, ‘if you will have it so, I will tell you; but keep the secret.’

“‘I'll keep it with the faithfulness of a thief, which is the most loyal to be found anywhere.’

“‘If it is the same to you, monsieur, I'd rather you kept it with your own.’

“Thereupon, she adjusted her neckerchief and posed herself to tell the tale; for it is very certain that an attitude of confidence and security is desirable in order to make a narration. The best tales are told at special

hours, — like that in which we are now at table. No one ever told a story well, standing or fasting.

“ If I were to reproduce faithfully poor Rosalie’s diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarce suffice. But as the event of which she now gave me a hazy knowledge falls into place between the facts revealed by the garrulity of the notary, and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the mean terms of an arithmetical proposition lie between its two extremes, all I have to do is to tell it to you in few words. I therefore give a summary of what I heard from Rosalie.

“ The chamber which Madame de Merret occupied at La Grande Bretèche was on the ground-floor. A small closet about four feet in depth was made in the wall, and served as a wardrobe. Three months before the evening when the facts I am about to relate to you happened, Madame de Merret had been so seriously unwell that her husband left her alone in her room and slept himself in a chamber on the first floor. By one of those mere chances which it is impossible to foresee, he returned, on the evening in question, two hours later than usual from the club where he went habitually to read the papers and talk politics with the inhabitants of the town. His wife thought him at home and in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a lively discussion ; the game of billiards was a heated one ; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum

for Vendôme, where everybody hoards his money, and where manners and customs are restrained within modest limits worthy of all praise, — which may, perhaps, be the source of a certain true happiness which no Parisian cares anything at all about.

“ For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been in the habit of asking Rosalie, when he came in, if his wife were in bed. Being told, invariably, that she was, he at once went to his own room with the contentment that comes of confidence and custom. This evening, on returning home, he took it into his head to go to Madame de Merret’s room and tell her his ill-luck, perhaps to be consoled for it. During dinner he had noticed that his wife was coquettishly dressed; and as he came from the club the thought crossed his mind that she was no longer ill, that her convalescence had made her lovelier than ever, — a fact he perceived, as husbands are wont to perceive things, too late.

“ Instead of calling Rosalie, who at that moment was in the kitchen watching a complicated game of ‘brisque,’ at which the cook and the coachman were playing, Monsieur de Merret went straight to his wife’s-room by the light of his lantern, which he had placed on the first step of the stairway. His step, which was easily recognized, resounded under the arches of the corridor. Just as he turned the handle of his wife’s door he fancied he heard the door of the closet, which I mentioned

to you, shut ; but when he entered, Madame de Merret was alone, standing before the fireplace. The husband thought to himself that Rosalie must be in the closet ; and yet a suspicion, which sounded in his ears like the ringing of bells, made him distrustful. He looked at his wife, and fancied he saw something wild and troubled in her eyes.

“ ‘You are late in coming home,’ she said. That voice, usually so pure and gracious, seemed to him slightly changed.

“ Monsieur de Merret made no answer, for at that moment Rosalie entered the room. Her appearance was a thunderbolt to him. He walked up and down the room with his arms crossed, going from one window to another with a uniform movement.

“ ‘Have you heard anything to trouble you?’ asked his wife, timidly, while Rosalie was undressing her. He made no answer.

“ ‘You can leave the room,’ said Madame de Merret to the maid. ‘I will arrange my hair myself.’

“ She guessed some misfortune at the mere sight of her husband’s face, and wished to be alone with him.

“ When Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she went no further than the corridor, Monsieur de Merret came to his wife and stood before her. Then he said, coldly :

“ ‘Madame, there is some one in your closet.’

“ She looked at her husband with a calm air, and answered, ‘ No, monsieur.’

“ That ‘ no ’ agonized Monsieur de Merret, for he did not believe it. And yet his wife had never seemed purer nor more saintly than she did at that moment. He rose and went towards the closet to open the door ; Madame de Merret took him by the hand and stopped him ; she looked at him with a sad air and said, in a voice that was strangely shaken : ‘ If you find no one, remember that all is over between us.’

“ The infinite dignity of his wife’s demeanor restored her husband’s respect for her, and suddenly inspired him with one of those resolutions which need some wider field to become immortal.

“ ‘ No, Josephine,’ he said, ‘ I will not look there. In either case we should be separated forever. Listen to me : I know the purity of your soul, I know that you lead a saintly life ; you would not commit a mortal sin to save yourself from death.’

“ At these words, Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard eye.

“ ‘ Here is your crucifix,’ he went on. ‘ Swear to me before God that there is no one in that closet and I will believe you ; I will not open that door.’

“ Madame de Merret took the crucifix and said ‘ I swear it.’

“ ‘Londer!’ said her husband; ‘repeat after me, — I swear before God that there is no person in that closet.’

“ She repeated the words composedly.

“ ‘That is well,’ said Monsiennr de Merret, coldly. After a moment’s silence he added, examining the ebony crucifix inlaid with silver, ‘That is a beautiful thing; I did not know you possessed it; it is very artistically wrought.’

“ ‘I found it at Duvivier’s,’ she replied; ‘he bought it of a Spanish monk when those prisoners-of-war passed through Vendôme last year.’

“ ‘Ah!’ said Monsieur de Merret, replacing the crucifix on the wall. He rang the bell. Rosalie was not long in answering it. Monsieur de Merret went quickly up to her, took her into the recess of a window on the garden side, and said to her in a low voice: —

“ ‘I am told that Gorenflot wants to marry you, and that poverty alone prevents it, for you have told him you will not be his wife until he is a master-mason. Is that so?’

“ ‘Yes, monsieur.’

“ ‘Well, go and find him; tell him to come here at once and bring his trowel and other tools. Take care not to wake any one at his house but himself; he will soon have enough money to satisfy you. No talking to any one when you leave this room, mind. or —’

“He frowned. Rosalie left the room. He called her back; ‘Here, take my pass-key,’ he said.

“Monsieur de Merret, who had kept his wife in view while giving these orders, now sat down beside her before the fire and began to tell her of his game of billiards, and the political discussions at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret talking amicably.

“The master had lately had the ceilings of all the reception rooms on the lower floor restored. Plaster is very scarce at Vendôme, and the carriage of it makes it expensive. Monsieur de Merret had therefore ordered an ample quantity for his own wants, knowing that he could readily find buyers for what was left. This circumstance inspired the idea that now possessed him.

“‘Monsieur, Gorenflot has come,’ said Rosalie.

“‘Bring him in,’ said her master.

“Madame de Merret turned slightly pale when she saw the mason.

“‘Gorenflot,’ said her husband, ‘fetch some bricks from the coach-house, — enough to wall up that door; use the plaster that was left over, to cover the wall.’

“Then he called Rosalie and the mason to the end of the room, and, speaking in a low voice, added, ‘Listen to me, Gorenflot; after you have done this work you will sleep in the house; and to-morrow morning

I will give you a passport into a foreign country, and six thousand francs for the journey. Go through Paris where I will meet you. There, I will secure to you legally another six thousand francs, to be paid to you at the end of ten years if you still remain out of France. For this sum, I demand absolute silence on what you see and do this night. As for you, Rosalie, I give you a dowry of ten thousand francs, on condition that you marry Gorenflot, and keep silence, if not—'

“ ‘Rosalie,’ said Madame de Merret, ‘come and brush my hair.’

“ The husband walked up and down the room, watching the door, the mason, and his wife, but without allowing the least distrust or misgiving to appear in his manner. Gorenflot’s work made some noise; under cover of it Madame de Merret said hastily to Rosalie, while her husband was at the farther end of the room. ‘A thousand francs annuity if you tell Gorenflot to leave a crevice at the bottom;’ then aloud she added, composedly, ‘Go and help the mason.’

“ Monsieur and Madame de Merret remained silent during the whole time it took Gorenflot to wall up the door. The silence was intentional on the part of the husband to deprive his wife of all chance of saying words with a double meaning which might be heard within the closet; with Madame de Merret it was either prudence or pride.

“When the wall was more than half up, the mason’s tool broke one of the panes of glass in the closet door; Monsieur de Merret’s back was at that moment turned away. The action proved to Madame de Merret that Rosalie had spoken to the mason. In that one instant she saw the dark face of a man with black hair and fiery eyes. Before her husband turned the poor creature had time to make a sign with her head which meant ‘Hope.’

“By four o’clock, just at dawn, for it was in the month of September, the work was done. Monsieur de Merret remained that night in his wife’s room. The next morning, on rising, he said, carelessly: ‘Ah! I forgot, I must go to the mayor’s office about that passport.’

“He put on his hat, made three steps to the door, then checked himself, turned back, and took the crucifix.

“His wife trembled with joy; ‘He will go to Duvier’s,’ she thought.

“The moment her husband had left the house she rang for Rosalie. ‘The pick-axe!’ she cried, ‘the pick-axe! I watched how Gorenflot did it; we shall have time to make a hole and close it again.’

“In an instant Rosalie had brought a sort of cleaver, and her mistress, with a fury no words can describe, began to demolish the wall. She had knocked away

“ She had knocked away a few bricks, and was drawing back to strike a still more vigorous blow with all her strength, when she saw her husband behind her.”



Laurent Desroussaux

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Procedi Gospel

a few bricks, and was drawing back to strike a still more vigorous blow with all her strength, when she saw her husband behind her. She fainted.

“‘Put madame on her bed,’ said her husband, coldly.

“‘Foreseeing what would happen, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had written to the mayor, and sent for Duvivier. The jeweller arrived just as the room had been again put in order.

“‘Duvivier,’ said Monsieur de Merret, ‘I think you bought some crucifixes of those Spaniards who were here last year?’

“‘No, monsieur, I did not.’

“‘Very good; thank you,’ he said, with a tigerish glance at his wife. ‘Jean,’ he added to the footman, ‘serve my meals in Madame de Merret’s bedroom; she is very ill, and I shall not leave her till she recovers.’

“‘For twenty days that man remained beside his wife. During the first hours, when sounds were heard behind the walled door, and Josephine tried to implore mercy for the dying stranger, he answered, without allowing her to utter a word:—

“‘You swore upon the cross that no one was there.’”

As the tale ended the women rose from table, and the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. Nevertheless, several of them were conscious of a cold chill as they recalled the last words.

THE PURSE.

TO SOFKA :

HAVE you ever remarked, Mademoiselle, that when the painters and sculptors of the middle ages placed two figures in adoration beside some glorious saint they have always given them a filial resemblance ?

When you see your name among those dear to me, under whose protection I place my books, remember this likeness and you will find here not so much a homage as an expression of the fraternal affection felt for you by

Your servant,

DE BALZAC.

FOR souls easily moved to joyous feelings there comes a delightful moment when night is not yet and day is no more ; the twilight casts its soft tones or its fantastic reflections over everything, and invites to a reverie which blends vaguely with the play of light and shadow. The silence that nearly always reigns at such a moment renders it particularly dear to artists, who then gather up their thoughts, stand back a little from their creations, at which they can see to work no longer, and

judge them in the intoxication of a subject the esoteric meaning of which then blazes forth to the inner eyes of genius. He who has never stood pensive beside a friend at that dreamy, poetic moment will have difficulty in comprehending its unspeakable benefits. Thanks to the half-light, the *chiaro-scuro*, all the material deceptions employed by art to simulate truth disappear. If a picture is the thing concerned, the persons it represents seem to speak and move; the shadow is really shadow, the light is day, the flesh is living, the eyes turn, the blood flows in the veins, and the silks shimmer. At that hour illusion reigns unchallenged; perhaps it only rises at night-fall! Indeed, illusion is to thought a sort of night which we decorate with dreams. Then it is that she spreads her wings and bears the soul to the world of fantasy, — a world teeming with voluptuous caprices, where the artist forgets the actual world, forgets yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, all, even his distresses, the happy as well as the bitter ones.

At that magic hour a young painter, a man of talent, who saw nought in art but art itself, was perched on a double ladder which he used for the purpose of painting a very large picture, now nearly finished. There, criticising himself and admiring himself in perfect good faith, he was lost in one of those meditations which ravish the soul, enlarge it, caress it, and console it. His reverie no doubt lasted long. Night came. Whether he

tried to come down his ladder, or whether, thinking he was on the ground, he made some imprudent movement, he was unable to remember, but at any rate he fell, his head struck a stool, he lost consciousness and lay for a time, but how long he did not know, without moving.

A soft voice drew him from the sort of stupor in which he was plunged. When he opened his eyes a bright light made him close them again; but through the veil that wrapped his senses he heard the murmur of women's voices, and felt two young and timid hands about his head. He soon recovered consciousness and perceived, by the light of one of those old-fashioned lamps called "double air-currents," the head of the loveliest young girl he had ever seen, — one of those heads which are often thought artistic fancies, but which for him suddenly realized the noble ideal which each artist creates for himself, and from which his genius proceeds. The face of the unknown maiden belonged, if we may say so, to the school of Prudhon, and it also possessed the poetic charm which Girodet has given to his imaginary visions. The delightful coolness of the temples, the evenness of the eyebrows, the purity of the outlines, the virginity strongly imprinted on that countenance, made the young girl a perfected being.

Her clothes, though simple and neat, bespoke neither wealth nor poverty. When the painter regained possession of himself, he expressed his admiration in a

look of surprise as he stammered his thanks. He felt his forehead pressed by a handkerchief, and he recognized, in spite of the peculiar odor of an atelier, the strong fumes of hartshorn, used, no doubt, to bring him to himself. Next he noticed an old lady, like a countess of the old régime, who held the lamp and was advising her companion.

“Monsieur,” replied the young girl to one of the painter’s questions asked during the moment when he was still half-unconscious, “my mother and I heard the noise of your fall on the floor and we thought we also heard a groan. The silence which succeeded your fall alarmed us and we hastened to come up to you. Finding the key in the door we fortunately ventured to come in. We found you lying on the floor unconscious. My mother obtained what was necessary to bring you to and to stanch the blood. You are hurt in the forehead; there, do you feel it?”

“Yes, now I do,” he said.

“It is a mere nothing,” said the old mother, “fortunately your fall was broken by that lay-figure.”

“I feel much better,” said the painter; “all I want is a carriage to take me home. The porter can fetch it.”

He tried to reiterate his thanks to the two ladies, but at every sentence the mother interrupted him, saying: “To-morrow, monsieur, put on blisters or apply

leeches; drink a few cups of some restorative; take care of yourself, — falls are dangerous.”

The young girl glanced shyly at the painter, and around the studio. Her look and demeanor were those of perfect propriety, and her eyes seemed to express, with a spontaneity that was full of grace, the interest that women take in whatever troubles men. These unknown ladies appeared to ignore the works of the painter in presence of the suffering man. When he had reassured them as to his condition they left the room, after examining him with a solicitude that was devoid of either exaggeration or familiarity, and without asking any indiscreet questions, or seeking to inspire him with a wish to know them. Their conduct was marked with every sign of delicacy and good taste. At first their noble and simple manners produced but little effect upon the painter, but later, when he recalled the circumstances, he was greatly struck by them.

Reaching the floor below that on which the studio was situated, the old lady exclaimed, gently, “Adélaïde, you left the door open!”

“It was to succor me,” replied the painter, with a smile of gratitude.

“Mamma, you came down just now,” said the young girl, blushing.

“Shall we light you down?” said the mother to the painter; “the stairway is dark.”

“ Oh, thank you, madame, but I feel much better.”

“ Hold by the baluster.”

The two women stood on the landing to light the young man, listening to the sound of his steps.

To explain all that made this scene piquant and unexpected to the painter, we must add that he had only lately removed his studio to the attic of this house, which stood at the darkest and muddiest part of the rue de Suresnes, nearly opposite to the church of the Madeleine, a few steps from his apartments, which were in the rue des Champs Élysées. The celebrity his talent had won for him made him dear to France, and he was just beginning to no longer feel the troubles of want, and to enjoy, as he said, his last miseries. Instead of going to his work in a studio beyond the barrier, the modest price of which had hitherto been in keeping with the modesty of his earnings, he now satisfied a desire, of daily growth, to avoid the long walk and the loss of time which had now become a thing of the utmost value.

No one in the world could have inspired deeper interest than Hippolyte Schinner, if he had only consented to be known; but he was not one of those who readily confide the secrets of their heart. He was the idol of a poor mother who had brought him up at a cost of stern privations. Mademoiselle Schinner, the daughter of an Alsatian farmer, was not married.

Her tender soul had once been cruelly wounded by a wealthy man who boasted of little delicacy in love. The fatal day when, in the glow of youth and beauty, in the glory of her life, she endured at the cost of all her beautiful illusions, and of her heart itself, the disenchantment which comes to us so slowly and yet so fast, — for we will not believe in evil until too late, and then it seems to come too rapidly, — that day was to her a whole century of reflection, and it was also a day of religious thoughts and resignation. She refused the alms of the man who had betrayed her; she renounced the world, and made an honor of her fault. She gave herself up to maternal love, enjoying in exchange for the social enjoyments to which she had bid farewell, its fullest delights. She lived by her labor, and found her wealth in her son; and the day came, the hour came which repaid her for the long, slow sacrifices of her indigence. At the last Exhibition her son had received the cross of the Legion of honor. The newspapers, unanimous in favor of a hitherto ignored talent, rang with praises that were now sincere. Artists themselves recognized Schinner as a master, and the dealers were ready to cover his canvases with gold.

At twenty-five years of age Hippolyte Schinner, to whom his mother had transmitted her woman's soul, fully recognized his position in the world. Wishing to give his mother the pleasures that society had so long

withdrawn from her, he lived for her only, — hoping to see her some day, through the power of his fame and fortune, happy, rich, respected, and surrounded by celebrated men.

Schinner had therefore chosen his friends among the most honorable and distinguished men of his own age. Hard to satisfy in his choice, he wished to gain a position even higher than that his talents gave him. By forcing him to live in solitude (that mother of great thoughts) the toil to which he had vowed himself from his youth up had kept him true to the noble beliefs which adorn the earlier years of life. His adolescent soul had lost none of the many forms of chastity which make a young man a being apart, a being whose heart abounds in felicity, in poesy, in virgin hopes, — feeble to the eyes of worn-out men, but deep because they are simple. He was endowed by nature with the gentle, courteous manners, which are those of the heart, and which charm even those who are not able to comprehend them. He was well made. His voice, which echoed his soul, roused noble sentiments in the souls of others, and bore testimony by a certain candor in its tones to his innate modesty. Those who saw him felt drawn to him by one of those moral attractions which, happily, scientific men cannot analyze; if they could they would find some phenomena of galvanism, or the flow of heaven knows what fluid, and

formulate our feelings in proportions of oxygen and electricity.

These details may perhaps enlighten persons who are bold by nature, and also men with good cravats, as to why Hippolyte Schinner, in the absence of the porter, whom he had sent to the rue de la Madeleine for a hackney-coach, did not ask the porter's wife any question as to the two ladies whose kindness of heart accident had revealed to him. But though he answered merely yes or no to the questions, natural enough under the circumstances, which the woman put to him on his accident, and on the assistance rendered to him by the occupants of the fourth floor, he could not prevent her from obeying the instincts of her race. She spoke of the two ladies in the interests of her own policy and according to the subterranean judgment of a porter's lodge.

“ Ah ! ” she said, “ that must have been Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother ; they have lived here the last four years. We can't make out what those ladies do. In the morning (but only till twelve o'clock) an old charwoman, nearly deaf, and who does n't talk any more than a stone wall, comes to help them ; in the evening two or three old gentlemen, decorated, like you, monsieur, — one of them keeps a carriage and servants, and people do say he has sixty thousand francs a year, — well, they spend the evening here and often

stay very late. The ladies are very quiet tenants, like you, monsieur; and economical! — they live on nothing; as soon as they get a letter they pay their rent. It is queer, monsieur, but the mother has n't the same name as the daughter. Ah! but when they go to walk in the Tuileries mademoiselle is dazzling, and often young gentlemen follow her home, but she has the door shut in their faces, — and she is right; for the proprietor would never allow —”

The coach having arrived, Hippolyte heard no more and went home. His mother, to whom he related his adventure, dressed his wound and would not let him go back to the studio the next day. Consultation was had, divers prescriptions were ordered, and Hippolyte was kept at home three days. During this seclusion, his unoccupied imagination recalled to him in vivid fragments the details of the scene that followed his swoon. The profile of the young girl was deeply cut upon the shadowy background of his inner sight; again he saw the faded face of the mother and felt Adélaïde's soft hands; he remembered a gesture he had scarcely noticed at the time, but now its exquisite grace was thrown into relief by memory; then an attitude or the tones of a melodious voice, made more melodious by recollection, suddenly reappeared, like things that are thrown to the bottom of a river and return to the surface.

So the first day on which he was able to go to work he went early to his studio ; but the visit which he had, incontestably, the right to make to his neighbors was the real reason of his haste ; his pictures were forgotten. The moment a passion bursts its swaddling-clothes it finds inexplicable pleasures known only to those who love. Thus there are persons who will know why the painter slowly mounted the stairs of the fourth story ; they will be in the secret of those rapid pulsations of his heart as he came in sight of the brown door of the humble apartments occupied by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This young girl, who did not bear the same name as her mother, had awakened a thousand sympathies in the young painter ; he longed to find in her certain similarities of position to his own, and he invested her with the misfortunes of his own origin. While he worked, Hippolyte gave himself, complacently, to thoughts of love, and he made as much noise as he could, to induce the ladies to think of him as much as he thought of them. He stayed very late at the studio, and dined there. About seven o'clock he went down to call on his neighbors.

No painter of manners and customs has dared to initiate us — restrained, perhaps, by a sense of propriety — into the truly singular interiors of certain Parisian homes, into the secret of those dwellings whence issue such fresh, such elegant toilets, women so brilliant on the outside who nevertheless betray signs

of an equivocal fortune. If the painting of such a home is here too frankly drawn, if you find it tedious, do not blame the description, which forms, as it were, an integral part of the history; for the aspect of the apartments occupied by his neighbors had a great influence upon the hopes and feelings of Hippolyte Schinner.

The house belonged to one of those proprietors in whom there is a pre-existent horror of repairs or improvements, — one of the men who consider their position as house-owners in Paris as their business in life. In the grand chain of moral species such men hold the middle place between usurers and misers. Optimists from self-interest, they are all faithful to the *statu quo* of Austria. If you mention moving a cupboard or a door, or making the most necessary of ventilators, their eyes glitter, their bile rises, they rear like a frightened horse. When the wind has knocked over a chimney-pot they fall ill of it, and deprive themselves and their families of an evening at the Gymnase or the Porte-Saint-Martin to pay damages. Hippolyte, who, apropos of certain embellishments he wished made to his studio, had enjoyed, gratis, the playing of a comic scene by Monsieur Molineux, the proprietor, was not at all surprised by the blackened, soiled colors, the oily tints, the spots, and other disagreeable accessories which adorned the woodwork. These stigmata of poverty are never without a certain poetry to an artist.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur herself opened the door. Recognizing the young painter she bowed to him; then, at the same moment, with Parisian dexterity, and that presence of mind which pride affords, she turned and shut the door of a glazed partition through which Hippolyte might have seen linen hung to dry on lines above a cheap stove, an old flock bed, coal, charcoal, flatirons, a water-filter, china and glass, and all utensils necessary to a small household. Muslin curtains, that were sufficiently clean, carefully concealed this "capharnaüm,"—a word then familiarly applied to such domestic laboratories, ill-lighted by narrow windows opening on a court.

With the rapid glance of an artist Hippolyte had seen the furnishing, the character, and the condition of this first apartment, which was in fact one room cut in two. The respectable half, which answered the double purpose of ante-chamber and dining-room, was hung with an old yellow paper, and a velvet border, manufactured no doubt by Réveillon, the holes and the spots of which had been carefully concealed under wafers. Engravings representing the battles of Alexander, by Lebrun, in tarnished frames, decorated the walls at equal distances. In the centre of the room was a massive mahogany table, old-fashioned in shape, and a good deal rubbed at the corners. A small stove, with a straight pipe and no elbow, hardly

seen, stood before the chimney, the fireplace in which was turned into a closet. By way of an odd contrast, the chairs, which were of carved mahogany, showed the relics of past splendor, but the red leather of the seats, the gilt nails, and the gimps showed as many wounds as an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard. This room served as a museum for a variety of things that are only found in certain amphibious households, unnameable articles, which belong both to luxury and poverty. Among them Hippolyte noticed a spy-glass, handsomely ornamented, which hung above the little greenish mirror on the mantel-shelf. To complete the oddity of this furniture, a shabby sideboard stood between the chimney and the partition, made of common pine painted in mahogany, which of all woods is least successfully imitated. But the red and slippery floor, the shabby bits of carpet before the chairs, and all the furniture, shone with the careful rubbing which gives its own lustre to old things, and brings out all the clearer their dilapidations, their age, and their long service.

The room gave out an indefinable odor resulting from the exhalations of the capharnaüm mingled with the atmosphere of the dining-room and that of the staircase, though the window was open and the breeze from the street stirred the cambric curtains, which were carefully arranged to hide the window-frame where

preceding tenants had marked their presence by various carvings, — a sort of domestic frescoint.

Adélaïde quickly opened the door of the next room, into which she ushered the painter with evident pleasure. Hippolyte, who had seen the same signs of poverty in his mother's home, noticed them now with that singular keenness of impression which characterizes the first acquisitions of our memory ; and he was able to understand, better perhaps than others could have done, the details of such an existence. Recognizing the things of his childhood, the honest young fellow felt neither contempt for the hidden poverty before him, nor pride in the luxury he had lately achieved for his mother.

“ Well, monsieur, I hope you are none the worse for your fall ? ” said the mother, rising from an old-fashioned sofa at the corner of the fireplace, and offering him a chair.

“ No, madame. I have come to thank you for the good care you gave me ; and especially mademoiselle, who heard me fall.”

While making this speech, full of the adorable stupidity which the first agitations of a true love produce in the soul, Hippolyte looked at the young girl. Adélaïde lighted the lamp with the double current of air, no doubt for the purpose of suppressing a tallow candle placed in a large pewter candlestick that was covered with drippings from an unusual flow of

tallow. She bowed slightly, placed the candlestick on the chimney-piece, and sat down near her mother, a little behind the painter, so as to look at him at her ease, while seemingly engaged in making the lamp burn; for the feeble flame of the double current, affected by the dampness of the tarnished chimney, sputtered and struggled with an ill-cut, black wick. Observing the mirror above the mantel-shelf, Hippolyte promptly looked into it to see and admire Adélaïde. The little scheme of the young girl served therefore only to embarrass them both.

While talking with Madame Leseigneur, for Hippolyte at first gave her that name, he examined the salon, but discreetly and with propriety. The Egyptian figures of the andirons (made of iron) could scarcely be seen on the hearth full of ashes, where two small sticks of wood were trying to meet each other in front of an imitation back-log of earthenware. An old Aubusson carpet, well-mended and much faded and worn, hardly covered the tiled floor, which felt cold to the feet. The walls were hung with a reddish paper in the style of a brocade with buff designs. In the centre of the partition opposite to the windows the painter observed an indentation and cracks in the paper, made by the two doors of a folding-bed, where Madame Leseigneur doubtless slept, and which was only partly concealed by a sofa placed in front of it. Opposite to the chimney, and

above a chest of drawers in mahogany, the style of which was handsome and in good taste, was the portrait of an officer of high rank. which the poor light hardly enabled the painter to make out; but, from what he could see of it the thought occurred to him that the frightful daub must have been painted in China. The red silk curtains to the windows were faded, like the coverings of the furniture in this salon with two purposes. On the marble top of the chest of drawers was a valuable tray of malachite, holding a dozen coffee-cups, exquisitely painted, and made no doubt at Sèvres. On the mantel-shelf was the inevitable Empire clock, a warrior driving the four horses of a chariot, the twelve spokes of the wheel each telling an hour. The wax tapers in the candelabra were yellow with smoke, and at each end of the shelf was a china vase filled with artificial flowers covered with dust and mixed with mosses.

Hippolyte noticed a card-table in the centre of the room, laid out with new packs of cards. To an observer there was something indescribably sad in this scene of poverty decked out like an old woman who tries to give the lie to her face. Most men of common sense would have secretly and immediately formulated to their own minds a problem: were these women honor and uprightness itself; or did they live by cards and scheming? But the sight of Adélaïde was to a young man as pure as Schinner the proof of perfect

innocence, and it provided the incoherencies of the room with honorable causes.

“My dear,” said the old lady to her daughter, “I am cold; make us a little fire, and give me my shawl.”

Adélaïde went into an adjoining room, where no doubt she slept herself, and returned, bringing her mother a cashmere shawl which when new must have been of great value, but being old, faded, and full of darns, it harmonized with the furniture of the room. Madame Leseigneur wrapped it artistically about her with the cleverness of an old woman who wishes to make you believe in the truth of her words. The young girl darted into the capharnaüm, and reappeared with a handful of small wood which she threw into the fire.

It would be difficult to write down the conversation which took place between these three persons. Guided by the tact which deprivations and trials endured in youth nearly always give a man, Hippolyte did not venture on the slightest allusion to the position of his neighbors, though he saw all around him the signs of an ill-disguised indigence. The simplest question would have been indiscreet, and permissible only in the case of an old friend. And yet the painter was deeply preoccupied by this hidden poverty; his generous heart ached for it; knowing, however, that all kinds of pity, even the most sympathetic, may be offensive, he grew embarrassed by the conflict that existed between his

thoughts and his words. The two ladies talked first of painting; for women readily understand the secret embarrassments of a first visit; perhaps they feel them, and the nature of their minds gives them the art of overcoming them. By questioning the young man on matters of his profession and his studies Adélaïde and her mother emboldened him to converse. The little nothings of their courteous and lively conversation soon led him naturally to remarks and reflections which showed the nature of his habits and his mind.

Sorrows had prematurely withered the face of the old lady, who must once have been handsome, though nothing remained of her good looks but the strong features and outlines, — in other words, the skeleton of a face which still showed infinite delicacy and much charm in the play of the eyes, which possessed a certain expression peculiar to the women of the old court, and which no words can define. These delicate and subtle points may, however, denote an evil nature; they may mean feminine guile and cunning raised to their highest pitch as much as they may, on the other hand, reveal the delicacy of a noble soul. In fact, the face of a woman is embarrassing to all commonplace observers, inasmuch as the difference between frankness and duplicity, between the genius of intrigue and the genius of the heart is, to such observers, imperceptible. A man endowed with a penetrating insight can guess

the meaning of those fleeting tones produced by a line more or less curved, a dimple more or less deep, a feature more or less rounded or prominent. The understanding of such diagnostics lies entirely within the domain of intuition, which alone can discover what others are seeking to hide. The face of this old lady was like the apartment she occupied; it seemed as difficult to know whether the penny of the latter covered vices or integrity as to decide whether Adélaïde's mother was an old coquette accustomed to weigh and to calculate and to sell everything, or a loving woman full of dignity and noble qualities.

But at Schinner's age the first impulse of the heart is to believe in goodness. So, as he looked at Adélaïde's noble and half-disdainful brow, and into her eyes that were full of soul and of thought, he breathed, so to speak, the sweet and modest perfumes of virtue. In the middle of the conversation he took occasion to say something about portraits in general that he might have an opportunity to examine the hideous pastel over the chimney-piece, the colors of which had faded and in some places crumbled off.

"No doubt that portrait is valuable to you, ladies, on account of its resemblance," he said, looking at Adélaïde, "for the drawing is horrible."

"It was done in China, in great haste," said the old lady, with some emotion.

She looked up at the miserable sketch with that surrender to feeling which the memory of happiness brings when it falls upon the heart like a blessed dew, to whose cool refreshment we delight to abandon ourselves. But in that old face thus raised there were also the traces of an eternal grief. At least, that was how the painter chose to interpret the attitude and face of his hostess, beside whom he now seated himself.

“Madame,” he said, “before long the colors of that pastel will have faded out. The portrait will then exist only in your memory. You will see there a face that is dear to you, but which no one else will be able to recognize. Will you permit me to copy that picture on canvas? It will be far more durable than what you have there on paper. Grant me, as a neighbor, the pleasure of doing you this service. There come times when an artist is glad to rest from his more important compositions by taking up some other work, and it will really be a relief to me to paint that head.”

The old lady quivered as she heard these words, and Adélaïde cast upon the artist a thoughtful glance which seemed like a gush of the soul itself. Hippolyte wished to attach himself to his two neighbors by some tie, and to win the right to mingle his life with theirs. His offer, addressing itself to the deepest affections of the heart, was the only one it was possible for him to

make ; it satisfied his artist's pride, and did not wound that of the ladies. Madame Leseigneur accepted it without either eagerness or reluctance, but with that consciousness of generous souls, who know the extent of the obligations such acts fasten on them, and who accept them as proofs of respect, and as testimonials to their honor.

“I think,” said the painter, “that that is a naval uniform?”

“Yes,” she said, “that of a captain in the navy. Monsieur de Rouville, my husband, died at Batavia, in consequence of wounds received in a fight with an English vessel which he met off the coast of Asia. He commanded a frigate mounting fifty-six guns, but the ‘Revenge’ was a ninety-gun ship. The battle was unequal, but my husband maintained it bravely until night, under cover of which he was able to escape. When I returned to France, Bonaparte was not yet in power, and I was refused a pension. Lately, when I applied for one again, the minister told me harshly that if the Baron de Rouville had emigrated I should not have lost him, and he would now in all probability be a vice-admiral ; his Excellency finally refused my application under some law of forfeiture. I made the attempt, to which certain friends urged me, only for the sake of my poor Adélaïde. I have always felt a repugnance to hold out my hand for money on the ground of

a sorrow which deprives a woman of her voice and her strength. I do not like these valuations of blood irreparably shed."

"Dear mother, it always harms you to talk on this subject."

At these words the Baronne Leseigneur de Rouville bowed her head and said no more.

"Monsieur," said the young girl to Hippolyte, "I thought that the occupation of a painter was generally a rather quiet one?"

At this question Schinner blushed, recollecting the noise he had been making overhead. Adélaïde did not finish what she seemed about to say, and perhaps saved him from telling some fib, for she suddenly rose at the sound of a carriage driving up to the door. She went into her room and returned with two gilt candelabra filled with wax tapers which she quickly lighted. Then, without waiting for the bell to ring, she opened the door of the first room and placed the lamp on the table. The sound of a kiss given and received went to the depths of Hippolyte's heart. The impatience of the young man to see who it was that treated Adélaïde so familiarly was not very quickly relieved, for the new arrivals held a murmured conversation with the girl, which he thought very long.

At last, however, Mademoiselle de Rouville reappeared, followed by two men whose dress, physiognomy,

and general appearance were a history in themselves. The first, who was about sixty years of age, wore one of those coats invented, I believe, for Louis XVIII., then reigning, in which the most difficult of all vestuary problems was solved by the genius of a tailor who ought to be immortalized. That artist knew, not a doubt of it! the art of transitions, which constituted the genius of that period, politically so fickle. Surely, it was a rare merit to know how to judge, as that tailor did, of his epoch! This coat, which the young men of the present day may consider a myth, was neither civil nor military, but might pass at a pinch for either military or civil. Embroidered fleurs-de-lis adorned the flaps behind. The gold buttons were also fleur-de-lised. On the shoulders, two unused eyelet-holes awaited the useless epaulets. These military symptoms were there like a petition without a backer. The buttonhole of the old man who wore this coat (of the color called "king's blue") was adorned with numberless ribbons. He held, and no doubt always did hold in his hand his three-cornered hat with gold tassels, for the snowy wings of his powdered hair showed no signs of the pressure of that covering. He looked to be no more than fifty, and seem to enjoy robust health. While there was in him every sign of the frank and loyal nature of the old *émigrés*, his appearance denoted also easy and libertine habits, — the gay passions and the careless joviality

of the *mousquetaires*, once so celebrated in the annals of gallantry. His gestures, his bearing, his manners, all proclaimed that he did not intend to change his royalism, nor his religion, nor his mode of life.

A truly fantastic figure followed this gay "*voltigeur* of Louis XIV." (that was the nickname given by the Bonapartists to these relics of the old monarchy); but to paint it properly the individual himself ought to be the principal figure in a picture in which he is only an accessory. Imagine a thin and withered personage, dressed like the first figure, and yet only the reflection or the shadow of it. The coat was new on the back of the one, and old and faded on that of the other. The powder in the hair of the counterpart seemed less white, the gold of the fleurs-de-lis less dazzling, the eyelets more vacant, the mind weaker, the vital strength nearer its termination, than in the other. In short, he realized that saying of Rivarol about Champeenetz: "He is my moonlight." He was only the echo of the other, a faint, dull echo; between the two there was all the difference that there is between the first and last proof of a lithograph. The chevalier—for he was a chevalier—said nothing, and no one said anything to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who stayed by the old beau, as a female companion by an old woman? Was he a mixture of dog, parrot, and friend? Had he saved the fortune, or merely the life of his benefactor?

Was he the Trim of another Uncle Toby? Elsewhere, as well as at Madame de Rouville's, he excited curiosity. Who was there under the Restoration who could recollect an attachment before the Revolution on the part of the Chevalier to his friend's wife, now dead for over twenty years?

The personage who seemed to be the less ancient of these two relics, advanced gallantly to the Baronne de Rouville, kissed her hand, and seated himself beside her. The other bowed and sat beside his chief, at a distance represented by two chairs. Adélaïde came up and put her elbows on the back of the chair occupied by the old gentleman, imitating unconsciously the attitude which Guérin has given to Dido's sister in his famous picture. Though the familiarity of the old gentleman was that of a father, it seemed for a moment to displease her.

“What! do you mean to pout at me?” he said.

Then he cast one of those oblique glances full of shrewdness and perception at Schinner, — a diplomatic glance, the expression of which was prudent uneasiness, the polite curiosity of well-bred people who seem to ask on seeing a stranger, “Is he one of us?”

“This is our neighbor,” said the old lady, motioning to Hippolyte. “Monsieur is the celebrated painter, whose name you must know very well in spite of your indifference to art.”

The gentleman smiled at his old friend's mischievous omission of the name, and bowed to the young man.

“Yes, indeed,” he said, “I have heard a great deal about his pictures in the Salon. Talent has many privileges, monsieur,” he added, glancing at the artist's red ribbon. “That distinction which we acquire at the cost of our blood and long services, you obtain young; but all glories are sisters,” he added, touching the cross of Saint-Louis which he wore.

Hippolyte stammered a few words of thanks and retired into silence, content to admire with growing enthusiasm the beautiful head of the young girl who charmed him. Soon he forgot in this delightful contemplation the evident poverty of her home. To him, Adélaïde's face detached itself from a luminous background. He answered briefly all questions which were addressed to him, and which he fortunately heard, thanks to that singular faculty of the soul which allows thought to run double at times. Who does not know what it is to continue plunged in a deep meditation, pleasurable or sad, to listen to the inward voice, and yet give attention to a conversation or a reading? Wonderful dualism, which often helps us to endure bores with patience! Hope, fruitful and smiling, brought him a thousand thoughts of happiness; what need for him to dwell on things about him? A child full of trust, he thought it shameful to analyze a pleasure.

After a certain lapse of time he was aware that the old lady and her daughter were playing cards with the old gentleman. As to the satellite, he stood behind his friend, wholly occupied with the latter's game, answering the mute questions the player made to him by little approving grimaces which repeated the interrogative motions of the other's face.

"Du Halga, I always lose," said the gentleman.

"You discard too carelessly," said the baroness.

"It is three months since I have been able to win a single game," said he.

"Monsieur le comte, have you aces?" asked the old lady.

"Yes, mark one," he answered.

"Don't you want me to advise you?" said Adélaïde.

"No, no; stay there in front of me! It would double my losses if I could n't see your face."

At last the game ended. The old gentleman drew out his purse and threw two louis on the table, not without ill-humor. "Forty francs, as true as gold!" said he; "and, the deuce! it is eleven o'clock."

"It is eleven o'clock," repeated the mute personage, looking at the painter.

The young man, hearing those words rather more distinctly than the others, thought it was time to withdraw. Returning to the world of common ideas, he uttered a few ordinary phrases, bowed to the baroness,

her daughter, and the two gentlemen, and went home, a prey to the first joys of true love, without trying to analyze the little events of this evening.

The next day the painter was possessed with the most violent desire to see Adélaïde again. If he had listened to his passion he would have gone to his neighbors on arriving at his studio at six o'clock in the morning. But he still kept his senses sufficiently to wait till the afternoon. As soon, however, as he thought he could present himself he went down and rang their bell, not without much palpitation of the heart, and then, blushing like a girl, he timidly asked Mademoiselle Le-seigneur, who had opened the door, for the portrait of Monsieur de Rouville.

“But come in,” said Adélaïde, who had no doubt heard his step on the stairway.

The painter followed her, abashed and out of countenance, not knowing what to say, — so stupid did his happiness make him. To see Adélaïde, to listen to the rustle of her gown after longing all the morning to be near her, after jumping up a dozen times and saying, “I will go!” and yet not daring to do so, — this, to him, was so rich and full a life that such emotions if too prolonged would have exhausted his soul. The heart has the singular property of giving an extraordinary value to nothings. We know the joy a traveller feels in gathering the twig of a plant or a leaf unknown to him,

when he has risked his life in the quest. The nothings of love are precious in the same way.

The old lady was not in the salon. When the young girl found herself alone with the painter she brought a chair and stood on it to take down the portrait; but perceiving that she could not unhook it without stepping on the chest of drawers, she turned to Hippolyte and said to him, blushing:—

“I am not tall enough. Will you take it down?”

A feeling of modesty, shown in the expression of her face and the accent of her voice, was the real motive of her request; and the young man, so understanding it, gave her one of those intelligent glances which are the sweetest language of love. Seeing that the painter had guessed her feeling, Adélaïde lowered her eyes with that impulse of pride which belongs only to virgins. Not finding a word to say and feeling almost intimidated, the painter took down the picture, examined it gravely in the light from the window, and then went away without saying anything more to Mademoiselle Leseigneur than, “I will return it soon.”

Each during that rapid moment felt one of those mysterious, violent commotions the effects of which in the soul can be compared only to those produced by a stone when flung into a lake. The soft expansions which then are born and succeed each other, indefinable, multiplying, unending, agitate the heart as the rings in

the water widen in the distance from the centre where the stone fell.

Hippolyte returned to his studio, armed with the portrait. His easel was already prepared with a canvas, the palette was set with its colors, the brushes cleaned, the light arranged. Until his dinner-hour he worked at the picture with that eagerness which artists put into their caprices. In the evening he again went to Madame de Rouville's and remained from nine to eleven. Except for the different topics of conversation, this evening was very like its predecessor. The old men arrived at the same hour, the same game of piquet was played, the same phrases were repeated, and the sum lost by Adélaïde's old friend was the same as that lost the night before, — the only change being that Hippolyte, grown a little bolder, ventured to talk to Adélaïde.

Eight days passed in this way, during which the feelings of the painter and those of the young girl underwent those delicious, slow transformations which lead young souls to a perfect understanding. So, day by day, Adélaïde's glance as she welcomed her friend became more intimate, more trustful, gayer, and more frank; her voice, her manners grew more winning, more familiar. They both laughed and talked and communicated their ideas to each other, talking of themselves with the naïveté of two children, who in the course of one day can make acquaintance as if they had lived

together for three years. Schinner wished to learn piquet. Totally ignorant of the game he naturally made blunder after blunder; and, like the old gentleman, he lost nearly every game.

Without having yet told their love, the two lovers knew very well that they belonged to each other. Hippolyte delighted in exercising his power over his timid friend. Many a concession was made to him by Adélaïde, who, tender and devoted as she was, was easily the dupe of those pretended sulks which the least intelligent of lovers, and the most artless of maidens invent, and constantly employ, just as spoilt children take advantage of the power their mother's love has given them. For instance, all familiarity suddenly ceased between the old count and Adélaïde. The young girl understood the painter's gloom, and the thoughts hidden beneath the folds of his brow, from the harsh tone of the exclamations he made as the old man unceremoniously kissed her hands or throat. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Leseigneur soon began to hold her lover to a strict account of his slightest actions. She was so uneasy and so unhappy if he did not come; she knew so well how to scold him for his absence, that the painter renounced seeing his friends, and went no longer into society. Adélaïde showed a woman's jealousy on discovering that sometimes, after leaving Madame de Rouville's

at eleven o'clock, the painter made other visits and appeared in several of the gayest salons of Paris. That sort of life, she told him, was very bad for his health, and she asserted, with the profound conviction to which the tones, the gesture, the look of those we love give such immense power, that "a man who was obliged to give his time and the charms of his mind to several women at once, could never be the possessor of a really deep affection."

So the painter was soon led, as much by the despotism of his passion as by the exactions of a young girl, to live almost wholly in the little home where all things pleased him. No love was ever purer or more ardent. On either side the same faith, the same mind, the same delicacy, made their passion grow apace without the help of those sacrifices by which so many persons seek to prove their love. Between these lovers there existed so constant an interchange of tender feelings that they never knew who gave or who received the most. A natural, involuntary inclination made the union of their souls close indeed. The progress of this true feeling was so rapid that two months after the accident through which the painter obtained the happiness of knowing Adélaïde, their lives had become one and the same life. From early morning the young girl, hearing a step above her, said to herself, "He is there!" When Hippolyte returned home to

dine with his mother he never failed to stop on his way to greet his friends ; and in the evening he rushed to them, at the usual hour, with a lover's punctuality. Thus the most tyrannical of loving women, and the heart most ambitious of love could have found no fault with the young painter. Adélaïde did indeed taste an unalloyed and boundless happiness in finding realized to its fullest extent the ideal of which youth dreams.

The old gentleman now came less often ; the jealous Hippolyte took his place in the evening at the green table, and was equally unlucky at cards. But in the midst of his happiness, he thought of Madame de Rouville's disastrous position, — for he had seen more than one sign of her distress, — and little by little an importunate thought forced its way into his mind. Several times, as he returned home, he had said to himself, “ What ! twenty francs every evening ? ” The lover dared not admit a suspicion. He spent two months on the portrait, and when it was finished, varnished, and framed, he thought it one of his best works. Madame de Rouville had never mentioned it to him ; was it indifference or pride which kept her silent ? The painter could not explain it to himself. He plotted gayly with Adélaïde to hang the picture in its right place when Madame de Rouville had gone out for her usual walk in the Tuileries.

The day came, and Adélaïde went up, for the first time alone, to Hippolyte's studio, under pretence of seeing the portrait favorably in the light in which it was painted. She stood before it silent and motionless, in a delicious contemplation where all the feelings of womanhood were blended into one, — and that one, boundless admiration for the man she loved. When the painter, uneasy at her silence, leaned forward to look at her, she held out her hand to him unable to say a word; but two tears dropped from her eyes. Hippolyte took that hand and kissed it, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, both wishing to avow their love, neither of them daring to. As the painter held her hand within his own, an equal warmth, an equal throb, told them that their hearts were beating with the same pulse. Too deeply moved, the young girl gently left her lover's side, saying, with a guileless look, "You will make my mother very happy."

"Your mother — only?" he asked.

"Oh, as for me, I am too happy," she replied.

The painter bent his head and was silent, frightened at the violence of the feeling the tone of those words awakened in his heart. Both understood the danger of their position, and they went downstairs with the portrait and put it in its place. That night Hippolyte dined for the first time with the baroness, who kissed

him with tearful gratitude. In the evening the old *émigré*, a former comrade of the Baron de Rouville, made a special visit to his two friends to announce his appointment as a vice-admiral. His terrestrial navigations across Germany and Russia had been credited to him as naval campaigns. When he saw the portrait, he shook the painter by the hand, exclaiming: "Faith! though my old carcass is not worth preserving, I'd gladly give five hundred pistoles for anything as like me as that is like my friend Rouville."

Hearing the proposal, the baroness looked at her friend with a smile, and let the signs of a sudden gratitude appear on her face. Hippolyte fancied that the old admiral intended to pay the price of the two portraits in paying for his own; he was offended, and said stiffly, "Monsieur, if I were a portrait-painter I should not have painted that one."

The admiral bit his lips and began to play. The painter sat by Adélaïde, who proposed him six kings which he accepted. While playing, he noticed in Madame de Rouville a degree of eagerness for the game which surprised him. The old lady had never before manifested such anxiety to win, or looked with such pleasure at the admiral's gold coins. During that evening suspicions once more came up in Hippolyte's mind to trouble his happiness and give him a certain *sensé* of distrust. Did Madame de Rouville live by

cards? Was she playing at that moment to pay some debt, or was she driven to it by some necessity? Perhaps her rent was due. That old man seemed too worldly-wise to let her win his money for nothing. What interest brought him to that poor house, — he, a rich man? Why, though formerly so familiar with Adélaïde, had he lately renounced all familiarities, — his right perhaps? These involuntary thoughts prompted Schinner to examine the old man and the baroness, whose glances of intelligence and the oblique looks they cast on Adélaïde and himself displeased him greatly.

“Can it be that they deceive me?”

To Hippolyte the thought was horrible, withering; and he believed it just so far as to let it torture him. He resolved to remain after the departure of the two old men, so as to confirm his suspicions or get rid of them. He drew out his purse at the end of the game, intending to pay Adélaïde, but his mind was so filled with these poignant thoughts that he laid it on the table and fell into a revery which lasted several minutes. Then, ashamed of his silence, he rose, answered some commonplace inquiry of Madame de Rouville's, going close up to her to scrutinize that aged face. He left the salon a prey to dreadful uncertainties. After going down a few stairs, he recollected his purse and went back to get it. “I left my purse,” he said to Adélaïde.

“No,” she answered, coloring.

“ I thought I left it there,” he said, pointing to the card-table.

Ashamed for both mother and daughter at not finding it, he stood looking at them with a bewildered air which made them both laugh; then he turned pale, and felt in his waistcoat pockets, stammering, “ I am mistaken, I must have it somewhere.”

At one end of the purse were fifteen louis, at the other some small change. The robbery was so flagrant, so impudently denied, that Hippolyte had no doubt as to the character of his neighbors. He stood still on the staircase, for he could hardly go down; his legs trembled, his head swam, he perspired, his teeth chattered in a cold chill, and he was literally unable to walk in the grasp of that cruel convulsion caused by the overthrow of all his hopes. At that moment, a crowd of apparently trifling circumstances came back into his mind, all corroborating his dreadful suspicions; taken together with the certainty of this last act, they opened his eyes to the character and the life of the two women. Had they waited till the portrait was done to steal his purse? Thus combined with profit, the theft seemed more odious than at first. The painter remembered, with anguish, that for the last two or three evenings Adélaïde had examined, with what seemed girlish curiosity, the netting of the worn silk, probably to ascertain the sum contained in the purse, — making jests that

seemed innocent, but were no doubt intended to cover the fact that she was watching for the time when the purse should be well filled.

“The old admiral must have good reasons for not marrying her, and the baroness intends that I —”

He stopped, and did not continue the thought, for it was checked by one more just.

“If,” thought he, “the baroness wished me to marry her daughter they would not have robbed me.”

Then, unable to renounce his illusions, or to abandon a love so deeply rooted in his being, he tried to find some explanation. “My purse must have fallen on the ground; perhaps it was under my chair; perhaps I have it, I am so absent-minded!” He felt in all his pockets with rapid motions, — but no, that cursed purse was not in them. His cruel memory recalled every particular of the fatal facts; he distinctly saw the purse lying on the table. Unable to doubt the theft, he now excused Adélaïde, saying to himself that no one ought to judge the poor and unfortunate too hastily. No doubt there was some secret in this apparently degrading action. He would not allow himself to believe that that proud, noble face was a lie. Nevertheless, that miserable apartment had now lost all those poesies of love which once embellished it; he saw it as it was, dirty and faded; it seemed the outward likeness of an inward life without nobleness, unoccupied and vicious.

Are not our feelings written, so to speak, on the things about us?

The next morning he rose without having slept. The anguish of the heart, that serious moral malady, had made great strides into his being. To lose an imagined happiness, to renounce an expected future, is far more bitter suffering than that caused by the ruin of an experienced joy, however great that joy may have been. Is not hope better than memory? The meditations into which our souls suddenly fall are then like a shoreless sea, on whose bosom we may float for a moment, though nothing can save our love from sinking and perishing. It is a dreadful death. Are not our feelings the most vivid and glorious part of our lives? From such partial death as this come those great ravages seen in certain organizations that are both delicate and strong, when assailed by disillusion or by the balking of hopes and passions. Thus it was with the young painter. He went out early in the morning and walked about in the cool shade of the Tuileries, absorbed in thought, and taking no notice of any one. There, by chance, one of his young friends met him, a college and atelier comrade, with whom he had lived as with a brother.

“Why, Hippolyte, what’s the matter?” said François Souchet, a young sculptor who had just obtained the *grand prix* and was soon going to Italy.

“I am very unhappy,” replied Hippolyte, gravely.

“Nothing but a love-affair can make you so. Wealth, fame, consideration, — you have everything else!”

Little by little, the confidences began, and finally the painter acknowledged his love. When he spoke of the rue de Suresnes, and of a young girl living on the fourth story, “Halt!” cried Souchet, gayly, “that’s a little girl I go to see every morning at the Assumption; I’m courting her. Why, my dear fellow, we all know her. Her mother is a baroness. Do you believe in baronesses who live on a fourth floor? Brrr! Well, well! you belong to the age of gold. The rest of us meet that old mother every day in the Tuileries. That face of hers, and the way she carries herself tells all. Come now, did you never guess what she is, from the way she carries her bag?”

The two friends walked about for some time, and several young men who knew Schinner and Souchet joined them. The painter’s love-affair was related by the sculptor, who supposed it of little importance.

Many were the outcries, the laughs, the jests, innocent enough, but full of the familiar gayety of artists, and horribly painful to Hippolyte. A certain chastity of soul made him suffer at the sight of his heart’s secret lightly tossed about, his passion torn to shreds, the young girl, whose life had seemed to him so modest, judged, truly or falsely, with such careless indifference.

“But, my dear fellow, have you never seen the baroness’s shawl?” said Souchet.

“Don’t you ever follow the little one when she goes to the Assumption?” said Joseph Bridau, a young art-student in Gros’s atelier.

“Ha! the mother has, among her other virtues, a gray dress which I regard as a type,” said Bixiou, the caricaturist.

“Listen, Hippolyte;” said the sculptor, “come here at four o’clock, and analyze the demeanor of the mother and daughter. If, after that, you have any doubts, I give you up, — nothing can ever be made of you; you’ll be capable of marrying your porter’s daughter.”

The painter parted from his friends a victim to a contradiction of feelings. Adélaïde and her mother seemed to him above such accusations, and at the bottom of his heart he felt remorse for having ever doubted the purity of that young girl, so beautiful and so simple. He went to his studio, he passed the door of the room where she was sitting, and he felt within his soul the anguish that no man ever misunderstands. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately that, in spite of the robbery of his purse, he adored her still. His love was like that of the Chevalier des Grieux, adoring and purifying his mistress in his thoughts as she sat in the cart on her way to the prison for lost women.

“Why should not my love make her the purest of beings? Shall I abandon her to sin and vice, and stretch no friendly hand to her?” That mission pleased him. Love makes profit out of all. Nothing attracts a young man so much as the thought of playing the part of a good genius to a woman. There is something truly chivalrous in such an enterprise which commends itself to lofty souls. Is it not the deepest devotion under the highest form, and the most gracious form? What grandeur in knowing that we love enough to love still where the love of others would be a dead thing!

Hippolyte sat down in his studio, and contemplated his picture without touching it. Night overtook him in that attitude. Wakened from his reverie by the darkness, he went downstairs, met the old admiral on the stairway, gave him a gloomy glance and a bow, and fled away. He had meant to go to his neighbors, but the sight of Adélaïde’s protector froze his heart and overcame his resolution. He asked himself, for the hundredth time, what interest it could be that brought that old beau, a man worth eighty-thousand francs a year, to that fourth story where he lost forty francs a night; that interest, he fancied, alas, he knew.

The next day and the following days Hippolyte spent on his work, trying to fight his passion by flinging himself into the rush of ideas and the fire of conception. He succeeded only partially. Study comforted him,

but it did not stifle the memory of those dear hours passed with Adélaïde. One evening, leaving his studio, he found the door of the apartments of the two ladies half-open. Some one was standing in the recess of the window. The position of the door and the stairs was such that Hippolyte could not pass without seeing Adélaïde. He bowed coldly, with a glance of indifference; then, judging of her sufferings by his own, an inward tremor overcame him, thinking of the bitterness his cold glance might have carried to a loving heart. What! end the sweetest joys that ever filled two sacred hearts, with the scorn of an eight days' absence, with a contempt too deep for words? — horrible conclusion! Perhaps that purse was found! he had never inquired; perhaps Adélaïde had expected him, in vain, every evening! This thought, so simple, so natural, filled the lover with fresh remorse; he asked himself if the proofs of attachment the young girl had given him, if those delightful conversations bearing the impress of love and of a mind which charmed him did not deserve at least an inquiry, — whether indeed they were not a pledge of justification. Ashamed of having resisted the longings of his heart for one whole week, thinking himself almost criminal in the struggle, he went that same evening to Madame de Rouville's. All his suspicious, all his thoughts of evil vanished at the sight of the young girl, now pale and thin.

“ Good God ! what is the matter ? ” he said to her, after bowing to Madame de Rouville.

Adélaïde made no answer, but she gave him a sad, discouraged look which went to his heart.

“ You look as if you had been working too hard,” said the old lady. “ You are changed. I fear we have been the cause of your seclusion. That portrait must have delayed other work more important for your reputation.”

Hippolyte was only too happy to find so good an excuse for his absence. “ Yes,” he said, “ I have been very busy — but I have suffered — ”

At these words Adélaïde raised her head ; her eyes no longer reproached him.

“ You have, then, thought us indifferent to what makes you happy or unhappy ? ” said the old lady.

“ I have done wrong,” he said. “ And yet there are sufferings which we can tell to no one, no matter who it is, even to a heart that may have known us long.”

“ The sincerity and the strength of friendship ought not to be measured by time. I have seen old friends who could not shed a tear for each other’s misfortune,” said the baroness, nodding her head.

“ But tell me, what is the matter ? ” asked Hippolyte of the poor girl.

“ Oh, nothing,” said the baroness ; “ Adélaïde insisted on sitting up two or three nights to finish a piece

of work; she would not listen to me when I told her that a day more or less could make no difference —”

Hippolyte was not listening. Seeing those two faces, so calm, so noble, he blushed for his suspicions and attributed the loss of the purse to some mysterious accident. That evening was delightful to him, and perhaps to her. There are secrets that young souls understand so well. Adélaïde divined her lover's thoughts. Without intending to reveal his wrongdoing, Hippolyte tacitly admitted it; he returned to his mistress more loving, more affectionate than ever, as if to buy a silent pardon. Adélaïde now tasted joys so sweet, so perfect, that the pangs which had cruelly bruised her spirit seemed but a slight penalty to pay for them. And yet that absolute accord between their hearts, that comprehension which was full of magic, was clouded suddenly by a little speech of Madame de Rouville's. “Let us get ready for our game,” she said. “My old Kergarouët insists upon it.”

That speech roused all the poor painter's fears; he blushed as he looked at Adélaïde's mother. Yet he could see on that face no other expression than one of a true kind-heartedness without insincerity; no latent thought destroyed its charm; in its shrewdness there was no perfidy; the gentle satire it expressed seemed tender, and no remorse marred its placidity. So he sat down at the card-table. Adélaïde shared his game,

pretending that he did not know piquet and needed an adviser. While they played, signs of an understanding passed between the mother and daughter which again made Hippolyte anxious, — all the more because, for once, he was winning. At last, however, a lucky throw put the lovers in Madame de Rouville's debt. Hippolyte withdrew his hands from the table to search for money in his pockets, and suddenly saw lying before him a purse which Adélaïde had slipped there without his noticing her; the poor child held his own purse in her hand, and was hiding her confusion by pretending to look for money to pay her mother. The blood rushed so violently to Hippolyte's heart that he almost lost consciousness. The new purse substituted for the old one had the fifteen louis in it, and was worked with gold beads. The rings, the tassels, all proved the good taste of the maker, who had no doubt spent her little savings on those ornaments of her pretty work. It was impossible to say with greater delicacy that the painter's gift could be acknowledged only by a pledge of tenderness.

When Hippolyte, overcome with happiness, turned his eyes on Adélaïde and her mother he saw them trembling with pleasure, happy in the success of their little fraud. He felt himself small, petty, contemptible; he longed to punish himself, to rend his heart. Tears came into his eyes, and he sprang up with an irresistible

impulse, took Adélaïde in his arms, pressed her to his heart, snatched a kiss, and cried, with the honest good-faith of an artist, looking straight at the baroness:—

“ I ask you to give her to me for my wife ! ”

Adélaïde's eyes as she looked at him were half-angry, and Madame de Rouville, somewhat astonished, was seeking a reply when the scene was interrupted by a ring at the bell. The vice-admiral appeared, followed by Madame Schinner. After guessing the cause of her son's grief, which he had vainly tried to hide from her, Hippolyte's mother had made inquiries among her friends as to Adélaïde. Alarmed by the calumnies which assailed the young girl, unknown to the old admiral, the Comte de Kergarouët, she went to the latter and told him what she had heard. In his fury he wanted, he said, “ to cut the ears of those rascals.” Excited by his wrath he told Madame Schinner the secret of his visits and his intentional losses at cards, that being the only way in which the baroness's pride gave him a chance to succor the widow of his old friend.

When Madame Schinner had paid her respects to Madame de Rouville, the latter looked at the Comte de Kergarouët, the Chevalier du Halga (the former friend of the late Comtesse de Kergarouët), then at Hippolyte and Adélaïde, and said, with the delightful manners of the heart, “ We seem, I think, to be a family party.”

LA GRENADIÈRE.

TO CAROLINE.

TO THE POESY OF HIS JOURNEY.

A Grateful Traveller.

LA GRENADIÈRE is a little habitation on the right bank of the Loire, sloping towards it and about a mile from the bridge of Tours. Just here the river, broad as a lake, is strewn with green islets, and margined by rocky shores, on which are numerous country-houses, all built of white stone and surrounded by vineyards and gardens, in which the finest fruits in the world ripen under a sunny exposure. Industriously terraced by generation after generation, the hollows of the rock reflect the rays of the sun, and the artificial temperature thus produced allows the cultivation of the products of hot climates in the open ground.

From one of the least sunken of these hollows which cut into the hillside, rises the sharp steeple of Saint-Cyr, a little village to which the scattered houses nominally belong. A little beyond, the Choisille falls into

the Loire, through a rich valley which runs up among the hills. *La Grenadière* [The Pomegranate], standing half-way up the rocky shore, about three hundred feet from the church, is one of those venerable homesteads some two or three hundred years old, which are seen in every lovely situation in Touraine. A cleft in the rock has facilitated the making of a stairway, which descends by easy steps to the "levée,"—the local name given to the dike built at the base of the slope to keep the Loire to its bed, and along which runs the mail road from Paris to Nantes.

At the top of this flight of steps is a gate opening on a narrow, stony road, cut between two terraces which resemble fortifications, covered with vines and palings to prevent the rolling down of the earth. This pathway, starting from the foot of the upper terrace, and nearly hidden by the trees that crown it, leads to the house by a steep pitch, giving a view of the river which enlarges at every step. This sunken path ends at a second gate, gothic in character, arched, and bearing a few simple ornaments, which is now in ruins and overgrown with gilli-flowers, ivy, mosses, and pellitory. These ineradicable plants decorate the walls of all the terraces, hanging from the clefts of the stone courses and designating each season by a garland of its own flowers.

Beyond this mouldy gate a little garden, wrested

from the rock by another terrace, with an old and blackened balustrade which overlooks the rest, presents a lawn adorned by a few trees, and a multitude of roses and other flowering plants. Opposite to the gate, at the other end of the terrace, is a wooden pavilion resting against a neighboring wall, the posts of which are hidden under jasmine, honeysuckle, vines, and clematis. In the middle of the garden stands the house, beyond a vaulted portico covered with vines, on which is the gate of a huge cellar hollowed in the rock. The house is surrounded with vine-clad arbors, and pomegranate-trees — which give their name to the place, — are growing in the open ground. The façade has two large windows separated by a very countrified front-door, and three attic windows, placed very high up in the roof relatively to the low height of the ground floor. This roof has two gables and is covered with slate. The walls of the main building are painted yellow, and the door, the shutters on the lower floor, and the blinds on the roof are green.

When you enter the house, you find a little hall-way with a winding staircase, the grade of which changes at every turn; the wood is rotten, and the balusters, turning like a screw, are discolored by long usage. To the right of the door is a vast dining-room with antique panelling, floored in white tiles, manufactured at Château-Regnault; on the left is the salon, a room

of the same size, but without panels, hung with a gold-colored paper with green bordering. Neither of the two rooms has a plastered ceiling. The joists are of walnut, and the spaces are filled in with a natural white clay mixed with hair. On the first floor are two large chambers with white-washed walls; the stone chimney-pieces in these rooms are less richly carved than those in the rooms below. All the windows face south. To the north there is only a door opening behind the staircase on a vineyard.

On the left of the house, a building with a wooden front backs against the wall; the wood being protected from the sun and rain by slates which lie in long blue lines, upright and transversal, upon the walls. The kitchen, consigned as it were to this cottage, communicates with the house, but it has an entrance of its own raised from the ground by a few steps, near to which is a deep well covered with a rustic pump; its sides overgrown with water-plants and tall grass and juniper. This recent construction proves that *La Grenadière* was originally a mere *vendangeoir*, where the owners, living in the city (from which it is separated only by the broad bed of the Loire), came only to attend to their vintages, or to bring parties of pleasure. On such occasions they sent provisions for the day, and slept there at night only when the grapes were being gathered.

But the English have fallen like a swarm of grass-hoppers upon Touraine, and La Grenadière was furnished with a kitchen that they might hire it. Fortunately this modern appendage is concealed by the first lindens planted along a path running down a ravine behind the orchard. The vineyard, of about two acres, rises above the house, and overlooks it on a slope so steep that it is very difficult to climb. Between the back of the house and this hill, green with trailing shoots, is a narrow space of not more than five feet, always cold and damp, a sort of ditch full of rampant vegetation, and filled in rainy weather with the drainage from the vineyard, used to enrich the soil of the flower-beds of the terrace with the balustrade.

The little house of the vine-dresser backs against the left gable; it has a thatched roof and makes a sort of pendant to the kitchen. The whole property is enclosed by walls and palings; the orchard is planted with fruit-trees of all kinds; in short, not an inch of the precious soil is lost to cultivation. If man neglects an arid corner of this rock, Nature flings into it a fig-tree perhaps, or wild-flowers, or a few strawberry-vines sheltered among the stones.

Nowhere in the world can you find a home so modest, yet so grand, so rich in products, in fragrance, and in outlook. It is in the heart of Touraine, a little

Touraine in itself, where all the flowers, all the fruits, all the beauties of that region are fully represented. There are the grapes of every clime, the figs, the peaches, the pears of every species, melons growing wild in the open ground, as well as liquorice, the yellow broom of Spain, the oleanders of Italy, the jasmine of the Azores. The Loire flows at your feet. You look down upon it from a terrace raised thirty fathom above its capricious waters. You inhale its breezes coming fresh from the sea and perfumed on their way by the flowers along its shores. A wandering cloud, which changes at every instant its color and its form as it moves in space beneath the cloudless blue of heaven, gives a thousand varied aspects to each detail of that glorious scenery which meets the eye wherever turned. From there, you may see the river shores from Amboise, the fertile plain where rises Tours, its suburbs, its manufactures, and Le Plessis ; also a portion of the left bank, from Vouvray to Saint-Symphorien, describing a half-circle of smiling vineyards. The view here is limited only by the rich slopes of Cher, a blue horizon broken by parks and villas. To the west the soul is lost in contemplation of the broad sheet of waters which bears upon its bosom, at all hours, vessels with white sails filled with the winds which ever sweep its vast basin.

A prince might make *La Grenadière* his villa ; a poet would make it his home ; lovers would count it

their sweetest refuge ; a worthy burgher of Tours might live there, — the spot has poems for all imaginations, for the humblest, for the coldest, as for the highest and the most fervent ; no one ever stayed there without breathing an atmosphere of happiness, without comprehending a tranquil life devoid of ambition, relieved of care. Revery is in the air, in the murmuring flow of waters ; the sands speak, they are sad or gay, golden or sullied ; all is in motion around the possessor of this spot, motionless amid its ever-blooming flowers and its toothsome fruits. An Englishman gives a thousand francs merely to live six months in that humble dwelling, and he binds himself to gather no products ; if he wants the fruits, he pays a double rent ; if the wine tempts him, he doubles it again. What, then, is *La Grenadière* worth, with that flight of steps, the sunken path, the triple terrace, the two acres of vineyard, those balustrades, those roses, the portico, its pump, the wealth of tangled clematis and the cosmopolitan trees ? Offer no price. *La Grenadière* cannot be bought. Sold once in 1690 for forty thousand francs, and left with bitter regret, as the Arab of the desert abandons a favorite horse, it still remains in the same family, of which it is the pride, the patrimonial jewel, the Regent diamond. To see is not to have, saith the poet. From these terraces you see three valleys of Touraine and the cathedral suspended in ether like a delicate filagree.

Can you pay for such treasures? Could you buy the health you will recover beneath those lindens?

In the spring of one of the finest years of the Restoration, a lady, accompanied by a maid and two children, came to Tours in search of a house. She saw *La Grenadière* and hired it. Perhaps the distance that separated it from the town decided her to take it. The salon was her bed-chamber; she put each child in one of the rooms on the upper floor, and the maid slept in a little chamber above the kitchen. The dining-room became the living-room of the little family. The lady furnished the house very simply, but with taste; there was nothing useless and nothing that conveyed a sense of luxury. The furniture was of walnut, without ornament. The neatness, and the harmony of the interior with the exterior made the charm of the house.

It was difficult to know whether Madame Williamson (that was the name the lady gave) belonged to the rich bourgeoisie, or to the upper nobility, or to certain equivocal classes of the feminine species. Her simplicity of life gave grounds for contradictory suppositions, though her manners seemed to confirm the most favorable. It was, therefore, not long after her arrival at Saint-Cyr that her reserved conduct excited the curiosity of idle persons, who had the provincial habit of remarking upon everything that promised to enliven the narrow sphere in which they lived.

Madame Williamson was rather tall, slight and thin, but delicately made. She had pretty feet, more remarkable for the grace with which they were joined to the ankles than for their narrowness, — a vulgar merit. Her hands were handsome when gloved. A certain redness, that seemed movable and rather dark in tone, disfigured her white skin, which was naturally fair and rosy. Premature wrinkles had aged a brow that was fine in shape and crowned with beautiful auburn hair, always braided in two strands and wound around the head, — a maidenly fashion which became her melancholy face. Her black eyes, sunken in dark circles and full of feverish ardor, assumed a calmness that seemed deceptive; for at times, if she forgot the expression she imposed upon them, they revealed some secret anguish. Her oval face was rather long, but perhaps in other days happiness and health may have rounded its outlines. A deceptive smile, full of gentle sadness, was ever on her pallid lips, but the eyes grew animated, and the smile expressed the delights of maternal love when the two children, by whom she was always accompanied, looked at her and asked those idle and endless questions which have their meaning to a mother's heart.

Her walk was slow and dignified. She wore but one style of dress, with a constancy that showed a deliberate intention to take no further interest in personal adornment, and to forget the world, by which, no doubt, she

wished to be forgot. Her gown was black and very long, fastened round the waist with a watered ribbon, and over it, in guise of a shawl, was a cambric kerchief with a broad hem, the ends passed negligently through her belt. Her shoes and her black silk stockings betrayed the elegance of her former life, and completed the conventional mourning that she always wore. Her bonnet, always of the same English shape, was gray in color and covered with a black veil.

She seemed very weak and ill. The only walk she took was from La Grenadière to the bridge of Tours, where, on a calm evening she would take the two children to breathe the cool air from the river and admire the effects of the setting sun upon a landscape as vast as that of the Bay of Naples or the Lake of Geneva. During the time she lived at La Grenadière she went but twice to Tours, — once to ask the principal of the college to direct her to the best masters of Latin, mathematics, and drawing; and next to arrange with the persons thus designated the price of their instructions, and the hours at which her sons could take their lessons. But it sufficed to show herself once or twice a week on the bridge in the evening, to rouse the interest of nearly all the inhabitants of the town, who made it their habitual promenade.

And yet, in spite of the harmless spying which the dreary leisure and uneasy curiosity of provincial towns

forces upon their leading societies, no real information as to the unknown lady, her rank, her fortune, or even her present condition, was obtained. The owner of *La Grenadière* did, however, tell some of his friends the name (and it was no doubt a true one) under which she had taken the lease. She gave it as "Augusta Williamson, Countess of Brandon." The name was doubtless that of her husband. The later events of her history confirmed this statement; but it was never made public beyond the little world of merchants frequented by the owner.

So Madame Williamson continued a mystery to the leading society of Tours, and all that she allowed them to discover was her simple manners, delightfully natural, her personal distinction, and the tones of an angelic voice. The complete solitude in which she lived, her melancholy, and her beauty so cruelly obscured and even faded, charmed the minds of a few young men, who fell in love with her. But the more sincere they were, the less bold they became; moreover, she was so imposing that it was difficult to address her. When one or two, more courageous than the rest, wrote to her, Madame Williamson put their letters unopened into the fire. She seemed to have come to this enchanting retreat to abandon herself wholly to the pleasure of living there. The three masters who were admitted to *La Grenadière* spoke with respectful

admiration of the close and cloudless union which bound the children and the mother in one.

The children also excited a great deal of interest, and no mother ever looked at them without envy. Both resembled Madame Williamson, who was really their mother. Each had a bright, transparent complexion and high color, clear, limpid eyes, long eyelashes, and the purity of outline which gives such brilliancy to the beauties of childhood. The eldest, named Louis-Gaston, had black hair, and a brave, intrepid eye. Everything about him denoted robust health, just as his broad, high forehead, intelligently rounded, foretold an energetic manhood. He was brisk and agile in his movements, a strapping lad, with nothing assuming about him, not easily surprised, and seeming to reflect on all he saw. His brother, named Marie-Gaston, was very fair, though a few locks of his hair were beginning to show the auburn color of his mother's. He had also the slender figure, the delicate features, and the winning grace so attractive in Madame Williamson. He seemed sickly, his gray eyes had a gentle look, his cheeks were pale; there was a good deal of the woman about him. His mother still kept him to embroidered collars, long curls, and those pretty jackets with frogged fastenings which are worn with so pleasing an effect, and which betray a feminine love of dress.

This dainty attire contrasted with the plain jacket of the elder brother, over which the plain linen collar of his shirt was turned. The trousers, boots, and color of the clothes were the same in the two brothers, and proclaimed their relationship as much as did their physical likeness. Seeing them together, it was impossible not to be struck with the care which Louis took of Marie. The look he gave him was paternal; and Marie, in spite of his childlike heedlessness, seemed full of gratitude to his brother. These two little flowers, scarcely apart on the same twig, were shaken by the same breezes and warmed by the same sun-ray; but while one was vigorous and rosy, the other was half-etiolated. A word, a look, an inflection of the voice sufficed to catch their attention, to make them turn their heads and listen, hear an order, a request, a suggestion, and obey. Madame Williamson made them understand her wishes and her will as though there were but one thought among them.

When they were running or playing before her in their walks, gathering a flower, examining an insect, her eyes rested upon them with such deep and tender emotion that the most indifferent observers were touched; sometimes they even stopped to watch the smiling children, and saluted the mother with a friendly glance. Who, indeed, would not have admired the exquisite nicety of their garments, the

pretty tones of their voices, the grace of their movements, their happy faces, and that instinctive nobility which told of careful training from their cradles? Those children seemed never to have wept or screamed. The mother had an almost electric sense of their wishes and their pains, and she calmed them or forestalled them ceaselessly. She seemed to dread a plaint from her children more than eternal condemnation for herself. All things in and about them were to her honor; and the picture of their triple life, seeming one and the same life, gave birth to vague, alluring visions of the joys we dream of tasting in a better world.

The domestic life of these harmonious beings was in keeping with the ideas their outward appearance conveyed; it was orderly, regular, and simple, as became a home where children were educated. The two boys rose early, by daybreak, and said a short prayer, taught them in infancy, — true words said for seven years on their mother's bed, begun and ended by two kisses. Then the brothers, trained to that minute care of the person so essential to health of body and purity of soul, dressed themselves as carefully as a pretty woman might have done. They neglected nothing, so fearful were they of a word of blame, however tenderly their mother might utter it, — as, for instance, when she said at breakfast one morning, “My dear angels, how did you get your nails so black already?”

After dressing, the pair would go down into the garden and shake off the heaviness of the night in its dewy freshness, while waiting for the servant to put in order the dining-room, where they studied their lessons till their mother woke. But from time to time they peeped and listened to find out if she were awake, though forbidden to enter the room before a given hour; and this daily irruption, made in defiance of a compact, was a delightful moment both to them and to their mother. Marie would jump upon the bed and throw his arms about his idol, while Louis, kneeling beside the pillow, held her hand. Then followed tender inquiries like those of a lover, angelic laughter, caresses that were passionate and pure, eloquent silence, words half-uttered, childish stories interrupted by kisses, begun again, always listened to, seldom finished.

“Have you studied your lessons?” the mother would say, in a gentle voice, ready to pity idleness as a misfortune, but readier still with a tearful glance for the one who could say he had done his best. She knew those children desired only to satisfy her; they knew she lived only for them, — that she led them by the wisdom of love and gave them all her thoughts and all her time. A marvellous instinct, which is neither reason nor egotism, which we may perhaps call sentiment in its first sincerity, teaches children whether they are or are not, the object of exclusive care, and whether

others find happiness in caring for them. Do you truly love them? then the dear creatures, all frankness and all justice, are delightfully grateful. They love passionately and jealously; they possess the sweetest delicacy, they can find the tenderest words; they confide to you, they trust to you in all things. Perhaps there are no bad children without bad mothers, for the affection children feel is always in reply to that they receive, to the first caress given to them, to the first words they have heard, to the first looks from which they have sought for love and life. At that period all to them is attraction or repulsion. God has put children in the womb of the mother to teach her that she must bear them long.

And yet we find some mothers cruelly misunderstood by their children; we see sublime maternal tenderness constantly wounded by horrible ingratitude and neglect, — showing how difficult it is to lay down absolute principles in matters of feeling.

In the heart of this mother and in those of her sons no one of the thousand ties which could attach them to one another was missing. Alone on earth they lived a united life and understood each other. When Madame Williamson was silent the boys said nothing, respectful even to the thoughts they could not share. But the elder, gifted with a mind that was already strong, was never satisfied with his mother's assurances that her

health was good ; he studied her face with silent uneasiness, unaware of danger, yet foreboding it when he noticed the purple tints round the sunken eyes and saw that the hollows deepened and the red patches on the face grew more inflamed. Full of true perception, when he thought that his brother's games were beginning to tire her he would say, " Come, Marie, let's go and breakfast ; I'm hungry."

But when he reached the door he would turn back to catch the expression on his mother's face, which always wore a smile for him, though sometimes tears would start from her eyes as a gesture of her boy revealed his exquisite feeling, his precocious comprehension of her sorrow.

The mother was always present at the lessons which took place from ten to three o'clock, interrupted at midday by the second breakfast, generally taken in the garden pavilion. After this meal came a play-hour, when the happy mother, the unhappy woman, lay on a sofa in the pavilion, whence she could see that sweet Touraine, incessantly changing, ceaselessly rejuvenated by the varying accidents of light and sky and season.

The boys ran about the place, climbing the terraces, chasing the lizards, themselves as agile ; they watched the seeds, and studied the insects and the flowers, running constantly to their mother with questions. Children need no playthings in the country ; the things about them are amusement and occupation enough.

During the lessons Madame Williamson sat in the room with her work ; she was silent and never looked at either masters or pupils, but she listened attentively to catch the meaning of the words and know if Louis were understanding them, and whether his mind were acquiring force. If he interrupted his master with a question, that was surely a sign of progress ; then the mother's eyes would brighten, she smiled, and gave the boy a look full of hope. She exacted very little of Marie ; all her anxiety was for the elder, to whom she showed a sort of respect, employing her womanly and motherly tact to lift his soul and give him a high sense of what he should become. Behind this course was a hidden purpose which the child was one day to comprehend — and he did comprehend it. After each lesson she inquired carefully of the masters what they thought of Louis's progress. She was so kindly and so winning that the teachers told her the truth and showed her how to make Louis work in directions where they thought him wanting.

Such was their life, uniform but full, — a life where work and play, cheerfully mingled, left no opening for ennui. Discouragement or anger was impossible, the mother's boundless love made all things easy. She had taught her sons discretion by refusing nothing to them ; courage, by awarding them just praise ; resignation, by showing them its necessity under all cir-

cumstances. She developed and strengthened the angelic nature within them with the care of a guardian angel. Sometimes a few tears would moisten her eyes, when, watching them at play, the thought came that they had never caused her a moment's grief. She spent delightful hours lying on her rural couch, enjoying the fine weather, the broad sheet of water, the picturesque country, the voices of her children, their merry laughs rippling into fresh laughter, and their little disputes, which only evidenced their union, and Louis's fatherly care of Marie, and the love of both for her.

They all spoke French and English equally well, and the mother used both languages in conversing with her boys. She ruled them by kindness, — hiding nothing, but explaining all. She allowed no false idea to gain a lodgment in their minds, and no mistaken principle to enter their hearts. When Louis wished to read she gave him books that were interesting and yet sound, true to the facts of life, — lives of famous sailors, biographies of great men, illustrious captains; finding in such books the occasions to explain to him the world and life, to show him the means by which obscure persons who had greatness within their souls, coming from the lower walks of life and without friends, had succeeded in rising to noble destinies.

Such lessons she gave him in the evening, when

Marie, tired with his play, was sleeping on her knees in the cool silence of a beautiful night, when the Loire reflected the heavens. But they increased her secret sadness, and ended often in leaving her exhausted, thoughtful, and with her eyes full of tears.

“Mother, why do you cry?” asked Louis, one rich June evening, just as the half-tints of a softly-lighted night were succeeding a warm day.

“My son,” she answered, winding her arm around the neck of the boy, whose concealed emotion touched her deeply, “because the hard lot of Jameray Duval, who reached distinction without help, is the fate I have brought on you and your brother. Soon, my dear child, you will be alone in the world, with no one to lean on, no protector. I am forced to leave you, still mere children; and yet I think that you, my Louis, know enough, and are strong enough to be a guide to Marie. I love you too well not to suffer from such thoughts. God grant you may not some day curse me.”

“Why should I curse you, mother?”

“Some day, my child,” she answered, kissing his brow, “you will realize that I have done you wrong. I abandon you, here, without means, without fortune, without” — she hesitated — “without a father,” she added.

Tears choked her voice; she gently pushed her son away from her, and he, understanding by a sort of

intuition that she wished to be alone, carried the sleeping Marie away with him. An hour later, when his brother was in bed, Louis returned with cautious steps to the pavilion where his mother was still lying. He heard her call, in a voice that sounded sweetly on his ear, —

“Louis, come!”

The boy flung himself into his mother's arms, and they kissed each other almost convulsively.

“Dearest,” he said, for he often gave her that name, finding even that too feeble to express his tenderness, “dearest, why do you fear that you will die?”

“I am very ill, my poor loved angel,” she said. “I grow weaker daily; my disease is incurable, and I know it.”

“What disease is it?”

“I must forget; and you, you must never know the cause of my death.”

The child was silent for a moment, glancing furtively at his mother whose eyes were raised to heaven, watching the clouds. Moment of tender melancholy! Louis did not believe in his mother's approaching death, but he felt her griefs without understanding them. He respected her long revery. Were he less a child he might have read upon that sacred face thoughts of repentance mingled with happy memories, — the whole of a woman's life; a careless girlhood, a cold marriage,

a terrible passion, flowers born of a tempest, hurled by the lightning to the depths of that abyss from which there is no return.

“My precious mother,” said Louis at last, “why do you hide your sufferings from me?”

“My son,” she answered, “we should always hide our troubles from the eyes of strangers, and show to them a smiling face; we should never speak to others of ourselves, but think only of them. Those things, if we practise them in our homes, will make others happy. Some day you, too, will suffer deeply. Then remember your poor mother, who died before your eyes hiding her griefs, and smiling for you; it will give you courage to bear the woes of life.”

Smothering her feelings, she tried to show her boy the mechanism of existence, the just value, the groundwork, and the stability of wealth; the power of social relations; the honorable means of amassing money for the wants of life; and the necessity of education. Then she revealed to him one cause of her sadness and her tears, and told him that on the morrow of her death he and Marie would be destitute, possessing only a trifling sum of money, and with no other protector than God.

“What haste I must make to learn!” cried the boy, glancing at his mother, with a deep, yet plaintive look.

“Ah, I am happy!” she exclaimed, covering her son with tears and kisses. “He has understood me!

Louis," she added, "you will be your brother's guardian, will you not? you promise me? You are no longer a child."

"Yes," he answered, "I promise; but you will not die yet? Say you will not!"

"Poor children!" she said, "my love for you detains me; and this country is so beautiful, the air is so reviving, perhaps —"

"I shall love Touraine more than ever now," said the lad, with emotion.

From that day Madame Williamson, foreseeing her end, talked to her eldest son of his future lot. Louis, who had now completed his fourteenth year, became more thoughtful, applied himself better, and cared less for play. Whether it were that he persuaded Marie to read, instead of caring only for games of play, it is certain that the two boys made much less noise in the sunken paths and in the terraces and gardens of La Grenadière. They conformed their life to the sad condition of their mother, whose face grew paler day by day, with yellow tints, the lines deepening night after night.

In the month of August, six months after the arrival of the little family, all was changed at La Grenadière. The pretty house, once so gay, so lively, had grown sad and silent, and its occupants seldom left the premises. Madame Williamson had scarcely strength to walk to the bridge. Louis, whose imagination had

suddenly developed, and who had now identified himself, as it were, with his mother, guessing her weariness, invented pretexts to avoid a walk which he felt was too long for her. Happy couples passing along the road to Saint-Cyr and the groups of pedestrians below upon the *levée* saw, in the warm evenings, the pale, emaciated woman in deep mourning, near her end yet still brilliant, pacing like a phantom along the terraces. Great sufferings are divined. Even the cottage of the vine-dresser became silent. Sometimes the peasant and his wife and children were grouped about their door, Fanny, the old English servant, would be washing near the well, Madame Williamson and her boys sitting in the pavilion, and yet no sound was heard in the once gay gardens, and all eyes turned, when the dying woman did not see them, to contemplate her. She was so good, so thoughtful for others, so worthy of respect from all who approached her!

Since the beginning of the autumn, which is always fine and brilliant in Touraine, and which, with its beneficent influences, its fruits, its grapes, did somewhat prolong the mother's life beyond the natural term of her hidden malady, she had thought of nothing but her children, and rejoiced over every hour she had them with her as though it were her last.

From the month of June to the month of September Louis studied at night without his mother's knowledge

and made enormous progress ; he was already in the equations of the second degree in algebra, had learned descriptive geometry, and drew admirably well. He was, in fact, prepared to pass an entrance examination to the *École Polytechnique*. Occasionally in the evenings he went to walk on the bridge of Tours, where he had met a lieutenant of the navy on half-pay ; the manly face, the decorated breast, the hearty bearing of this sailor of the Empire, affected his imagination. The lieutenant, on the other hand, took a fancy to the lad whose eyes sparkled with energy. Louis, eager for military tales and liking to ask questions, walked about with the old salt and listened to him. The lieutenant had a friend and companion in an infantry colonel ; young Gaston could therefore hear of the two lives, military and naval, life in camp and life on seaboard, and he questioned the two officers incessantly.

After a time, entering into their hard lot and their rough experience, he suddenly asked his mother for permission to roam about the canton to amuse himself. As the astonished masters had told Madame Williamson that her son was studying too hard, she acceded to his request with extreme pleasure. The boy took immense walks. Wishing to harden himself to fatigue he climbed the highest trees with agility, he learned to swim, and he sat up working at night. He was no longer the same child ; he was a young man, on whose face the sun

had cast its brown tones, bringing out the lines of an already deep purpose.

The month of October came, and Madame Williamson could rise only at midday, when the sun-rays, reflected from the Loire and concentrated on the terraces, produced the same equable warmth at La Grenadière that prevails on warm, moist days around the Bay of Naples, — a circumstance which leads physicians to recommend Touraine. On such days she would sit beneath an evergreen, and her sons no longer left her. Studies ceased, the masters were dismissed. Children and mother wished to live in one another's hearts, without a care, without distractions from the outside. No tears were shed, no happy laughter heard. The elder, lying on the grass beside his mother, was like a lover at her feet, which he sometimes kissed. Marie, restless and uneasy, gathered flowers, which he brought to her with a sad air, rising on tiptoe to take from her lips the kiss of a young girl. That pallid woman with the large black eyes, lying exhausted, slow in all her motions, making no plaint, smiling at her two children so full of health, so living, was indeed a touching spectacle amid the melancholy glories of autumn, with its yellowing leaves, its half-bared trees, the softened light of the sun and the white clouds of a Touraine sky.

The day came when Madame Williamson was ordered by the doctor not to leave her room. Daily it was

*“On such days she would sit beneath an evergreen,
and her sons no longer left her.”*



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adorned with the flowers she loved best, and her children stayed there. Early in November she opened her piano for the last time. A Swiss landscape hung above it. Beside the window the brothers, with their arms around each other, showed her their mingled heads. Her eyes moved constantly from her children to the landscape, from the landscape to her children. Her face colored, her fingers ran with passion along the ivory notes. It was her last fête, a fête hidden from others, a fête celebrated in the depths of her soul by the genius of memory.

The doctor came and bade her keep her bed. The sentence was received by her and by her sons in a silence that was almost stupid.

When the physician went away she said: "Louis, take me on the terrace that I may see the country once more."

At these words, simply said, the lad gave her his arm and took her to the centre of the terrace. There her eyes sought, involuntarily perhaps, the heavens rather than the earth; it would have been difficult at that moment to say where was the finer landscape, for the clouds represented vaguely the majestic glaciers of the Alps. Her brow contracted violently, her eyes took an expression of remorse and sorrow, she caught the hands of her children and pressed them to her beating heart.

“Father and mother unknown!” she cried, casting an agonized look upon them. “Poor children! what will become of you? And when you are men, what stern account will you not demand of me for my life and yours?”

She pushed her children from her, placed both elbows on the balustrade, hid her face in her hands, and remained for a few moments alone with her soul, fearing to be seen. When she roused herself from her grief she saw Louis and Marie kneeling beside her like two angels; they watched her looks and both smiled at her.

“Could I but take those smiles with me!” she said, drying her eyes.

She returned to the house and went to her bed, to leave it no more until they placed her in her coffin.

Eight days went by, each day like the rest. The old waiting-woman and Louis took turns to watch that bed at night, their eyes fixed on the patient. It was the same drama, profoundly tragic, which is played at all hours and in all families where they dread that every breath may be the last of some adored member. On the fifth day of this fatal week the doctor proscribed flowers. One by one the illusions of life were taken from her.

After that day Louis and Marie found fire beneath their lips when they kissed their mother's brow. At

last, on the Saturday night, she could bear no noise, and her room was left in disorder. That necessary neglect marked the beginning of the death of this woman, once so fastidious, so enamoured of elegance. Louis no longer left her even for a moment.

During the night of Sunday, in the midst of deepest silence, Louis, who thought her dozing, saw by the light of the lamp a white, moist hand put back the curtain.

“My son,” she said.

The tones of the dying woman were so solemn that their power, proceeding from her troubled soul, reacted violently on her child; he felt a burning heat in the marrow of his bones.

“What is it, mother?”

“Listen to me. To-morrow all will be over. We shall see each other no more. To-morrow you will be a man, my child. I am obliged to make certain arrangements which must remain a secret between you and me. Take the key of my little table. You have it? Open the drawer. You will find on the left two sealed papers. On one is marked *LOUIS*, on the other, *MARIE*.”

“I have them, mother.”

“My darling son, they are the legal records of your birth, of great importance to you. Give them to my poor old Fanny, who will take care of them for you, and return them to you when needed. Now,” she continued,

“ look again in the same place and see if there is not another paper on which I have written a few lines?”

“ Yes, mother.”

And Louis began to read: “ Marie Augusta Williamson, born at — ”

“ That will do,” she said quickly, “ Don’t go on. My son, when I am dead, give that paper also to Fanny and tell her to take it to the mayor’s office at Saint-Cyr, where they will need it to draw up the record of my death. Now bring what you require to write a letter at my dictation.”

When she saw that her son was ready and that he turned to her as if to listen, she said, in a calm voice, dictating: “ Sir, your wife, Lady Brandon, died at Saint-Cyr, near Tours, department of the Indre-et-Loire. She forgave you. Sign it — ”

She stopped, hesitating and agitated.

“ Do you feel worse?” asked Louis.

“ Sign it, ‘ Louis Gaston.’ ”

She sighed, then continued: “ Seal the letter and direct it to ‘ The Earl of Brandon, Brandon Square, Hyde Park, London, England.’ Have you written it? Very good,” she said. “ On the day of my death you must mail that letter from Tours. Now,” she continued, after a pause, “ bring my little pocket-book — you know it — and come close to me, dear child. In it,” she said, when Louis had returned to her, “ are twelve thousand

francs. They are rightfully yours, alas! You would have had far more had your father —”

“My father!” exclaimed the lad, “where is he?”

“Dead,” she replied, laying a finger on her lips, —
“dead to save my honor and my life.”

She raised her eyes to heaven; she would have wept had she still had tears for sorrows. “Louis,” she said, “swear to me on this pillow that you will forget all that you have written, and all that I have said to you.”

“Yes mother.”

“Kiss me, dear angel.”

She made a long pause as if to gather courage from God, and to limit her words to the strength that was left to her.

“Listen,” she said at last. “These twelve thousand francs are your whole fortune; you must keep them upon your person, because when I am dead, the legal authorities will come here and put seals on everything. Nothing will belong to you, not even your mother. Poor orphans! all you can do is to go away — God knows where. I have provided for Fanny; she will have three hundred francs a year and stay in Tours. But what will you do with yourself and your brother?”

She raised herself in the bed and looked at the brave boy, who, with great drops on his forehead, pale from emotion, his eyes half-veiled in tears, stood erect before her.

“Mother,” he replied in a deep voice, “I have thought of it. I shall take Marie to the college of Tours. I shall give ten thousand francs to old Fanny and tell her to put them in safety, and to watch over my brother. Then, with the rest, I will go to Brest, and enter the navy as an apprentice. While Marie is getting his education I shall be promoted lieutenant. Mother, die easy; I shall be rich; I will put our boy into the *École Polytechnique*, and he shall follow his bent.”

A flash of joy came from the half-quenched eyes of the mother; two tears rolled down her burning cheeks; then a great sigh escaped her lips. She barely escaped dying at that moment from the joy of finding the soul of the father in that of her son, now suddenly transformed into a man.

“Angel from heaven!” she said; weeping, “you have healed my sorrows with those words. Ah! I can die now. He is my son,” she added; “I have made, I have trained, a man.”

She raised her hands in the air and clasped them, as if to express a boundless joy; then she lay back on the pillows.

“Mother, you are turning white,” cried the boy.

“Fetch a priest,” she answered, in a dying voice.

Louis woke old Fanny, who ran in terror to the parsonage of Saint-Cyr.

Early in the morning Madame Williamson received the sacraments in presence of her children, with old Fanny, and the family of the vine-dresser, simple folk, now part of the family, kneeling round her. The silver cross borne by a humble choir boy, a village choir boy ! was held before the bed ; an old priest administered the viaticum to the dying mother. The viaticum ! sublime word, idea more sublime than the word, which the apostolic religion of the Roman Church alone employs.

“ This woman has suffered much,” said the curate in his simple language.

Madame Williamson heard no longer ; but her eyes remained fastened on her children. All present, in mortal terror, listened in the deep silence to the breathing of the dying woman as it slackened and grew slower. At intervals, a deep sigh showed that life was still continuing the inward struggle. At last, the mother breathed no longer. Those present wept, excepting Marie, too young, poor child, to be aware of death. Fanny and the vine-dresser’s wife closed the eyes of the once exquisite creature, whose beauty reappeared in all its glory. They sent away those present, took the furniture from the room, placed the body of the departed in its shroud, lighted the wax-tapers around the bed, arranged the basin of holy water, the branch of box, and the crucifix, after the manner of that region of country, closed the blinds

and drew the curtains. Then the vicar came and passed the night in prayer with Louis, who would not leave his mother.

The funeral took place Tuesday morning; old Fanny, the children, and the vine-dresser alone followed the body of a woman whose beauty, wit, and grace had given her in other days a European fame; and whose funeral would have been pompously heralded in the newspapers of London, as an aristocratic solemnity, had she not committed a tender crime, a crime always punished on this earth, perhaps to allow the pardoned angel to enter heaven. When the earth fell on his mother's coffin, Marie wept, comprehending then that he should see her no more.

A simple wooden cross stands above her grave and bears these words, given by the curate of Saint-Cyr.

HERE LIES

A SORROWFUL WOMAN.

SHE DIED AGED THIRTY-SIX,

BEARING THE NAME AUGUSTA IN HEAVEN.

PRAY FOR HER.

When all was over the children returned to La Grenadière to cast a last look upon their home; then, holding each other by the hand, they prepared to

leave it with Fanny, making the vine-dresser responsible to the authorities.

At the last moment the old waiting-woman called Louis to the steps of the well, and said to him apart :

“ Monsieur Louis, here is madame’s ring.”

The boy wept, — moved at the sight of a living memorial of his dead mother. In his strong self-command he had forgotten this last duty. He kissed the old woman. Then all three went down the sunken pathway, and down the flight of steps, and on to Tours without once looking back.

“ Mamma used to stand here,” said Marie, when they reached the bridge.

Fanny had an old cousin, a retired dressmaker, living in the rue de la Guerche. There she took the lads, thinking they could all live together. But Louis explained his plans, gave her Marie’s certificate of birth and the ten thousand francs, and the next day, accompanied by the old woman, he took his brother to the school. He told the principal the facts of the case, but very briefly, and went away, taking his brother with him to the gate. There he tenderly and solemnly told him of their loneliness in the world and gave him counsel for the future, looked at him silently a moment, kissed him, looked at him again, wiped away a tear, and went away, looking back again and again at his brother, left alone at the college gate.

A month later Louis Gaston was an apprentice on board a government ship, leaving the Rochefort roads. Leaning against the shrouds of the corvette "Iris," he watched the coasts of France as they dropped below the blue horizon. Soon he saw himself alone, lost in the midst of ocean, as he was in the midst of life.

"Must n't cry, young fellow; there's a God for all the world," said an old seaman, in his gruff voice, both harsh and kind.

The lad thanked him with an intrepid look. Then he bowed his head and resigned himself to a sailor's life, for — was he not a father?

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